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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN SPANISH
AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AT TWO GRADE LEVELS:
A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE STUDY

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "An Analysis of Student Grammatical Errors in Spanish as a Second Language at Two Grade Levels: A Quantitative and Qualitative Study" submitted by Hazel May Salmon in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

ABSTRACT

The immediate aims of this study were: (i) to determine the kinds of syntactical and morphological error types frequently made in Spanish at the second year and the fourth year grade levels in a number of Jamaican urban high schools, and (ii) to determine through an inter-linguistic and an intra-linguistic analysis of the observed error types the nature of the learning problems experienced by students in the acquisition of Spanish grammar.

Data for the study were obtained from the Spanish examination scripts of 205 second year students and 181 fourth year students in three co-educational and two girls' schools in Kingston and Spanish Town. The scripts resulted from mid-session examinations designed and administered by the schools. The data consisted of individual samples of at least one hundred item types testing the syntactical and the morphological concepts identified among the tasks of at least two schools. Error types yielded by each concept were recorded, classified and analyzed quantitatively and linguistically.

The questions underlying the quantitative analysis were: (i) Are there any significant differences between the second year and the fourth year error performance recorded on the same syntactic and morphological concepts? (ii) What level of difficulty for the second year and the fourth year students is represented by each of the grammatical concepts observed in their responses? To effect the quantitative analysis the proportion of errors based on the number of tasks that were performed in each sample was computed. A statistical test of the difference between two proportions was applied to the

corresponding second year and fourth year proportions to determine whether significant differences existed between them. The level of difficulty of each concept was assessed from a criterion error rate of 0.25 considered as suggesting that the related item types presented a fair level of difficulty.

Statistically significant differences at the $p < 0.05$ or the $p < 0.01$ levels were found to favour the second year students on three of the four corresponding syntactical concepts, and on two of the five corresponding morphological concepts. Of the total number of grammatical concepts observed in the data, fourteen of the fifteen syntactic and sixteen of the nineteen morphological concepts registered varying degrees of difficulty above the 0.25 criterion level. Higher proportions recorded for the Year IV students indicate the increasing difficulty of acquiring the grammatical structures of the language. In general, syntax appeared to present the greater learning problem to both groups of students.

Inter-linguistic interference (particularly from the English system) and intra-linguistic interference were reflected by errors in syntax and morphology. Correspondence with English appeared as the dominant feature of the syntactic errors. The dominant influence in morphology, especially in the verbal system, appeared overtly to be the Spanish system itself. In addition, a combination of both inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic interference was reflected by errors in both grammatical areas.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

I. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Benjamin Bloom¹ opines that ninety-five per cent of the students in school can attain mastery of what they are taught. In discussing his proposed strategy for such attainment he adopts the conceptual model suggested by Carroll² for the achievement of success of learning in general and of second-language learning in particular. The model depicts success of learning in the educational setting as resulting from a complex of five kinds of elements: the aptitude of the learner, his general intelligence, his perseverance, the quality of the instruction and the opportunity for learning. The element of time functions significantly in the model.

Success in foreign language education would seem to present a picture contrary to Bloom's proposed level of success. Belasco³ observes that only five per cent of the students enrolled in foreign

¹Benjamin S. Bloom, "Learning for Mastery," in Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning, ed. by Benjamin S. Bloom, J. Thomas Hastings, George F. Madaus, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971, pp. 43-57.

²Carroll, "Research on Teaching Foreign Languages," in Handbook of Research on Teaching, ed. by N. L. Gage, Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1963, pp. 1060 - 1061.

³Simon Belasco, "C'est la guerre? Or can Cognition and Verbal Behavior Co-exist in Second Language Learning," Modern Language Journal, Vol. 54, No. 6, October, 1970, p. 399.

language programs are successful. Supported by research, Valette⁴ posits that the teacher can counter this situation by deliberately "teaching for mastery" of the language skills.

Leon Jakobovits⁵ also explores Carroll's model to illustrate that "teaching is a remedial and compensatory process," his argument being that the essence of the quality of instruction lies in the adjustment the teacher makes to other factors in the learning situation. The idea of the adjustment of instructional practices to learner factors seems to be particularly relevant in the area of learners' errors which, predictably, are highly related to students' failure to acquire the skills of the second language.

Studies in the function of errors in first-language acquisition are viewed as being potentially valuable in assisting the second-language teacher in developing the kind of attitude which seeks to derive information from students' errors. Corder⁶ hypothesizes that "some . . . of the strategies adopted by the learner of the second language are substantially the same as those by which a first language is acquired." He views errors as the means by which these strategies may be observed. Brown and Fraser argue that errors are valuable in that

⁴Rebecca M. Valette, "Teaching for Mastery: The Role of Classroom Testing," *The Forum*, Vol. 2, No. 2, May, 1970, pp. 17-22.

⁵Leon Jakobovits, Foreign Language Learning, Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, 1970, pp. 90-103.

⁶S. P. Corder, "Significance of Learner's Errors," IRAL, Vol. 5, No. 4, November, 1967.

they contribute to the investigator's knowledge of the learner's strategy, that is, of the construction rules which are being employed in the learning process.⁷ From Berko's study on the acquisition of English morphology it was observed that the errors made by pre-school and first-grade children were related to the more regular patterns which had been correctly learned, an example being the production of *ringed for rang.⁸ An earlier study by Smith also pointed to children's tendency to analogize incorrectly, as was seen in the emissions of *mans, mens, foots, catched, runned.⁹ The implication from these studies that the systematic errors made by learners can offer clues as to what has already been learned and to the kinds of generalizations and over-generalizations being made, could be specially relevant to second-language teaching.

Smith observed that "the immaturity of the child is responsible for the greater proportion of his errors at two and three years, . . . (and) that at five and six years, the only errors occurring more than once per thousand words are those that are among the commonest in the speech of adults."¹⁰ A significant difference between first and

⁷ Roger Brown and Colin Fraser, "The Acquisition of Syntax," in Cognitive Development in Children, Society for Research in Child Development, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 337.

⁸ Jean Berko, "The Child's Learning of English Morphology," WORD: Journal of the Linguistic Circle of New York, Vol. 14, 1958, p. 175. A single asterisk (*) indicates an erroneous form.

⁹ Madorah E. Smith, "Grammatical Errors in the Speech of Pre-School Children," Child Development, Vol. 4, 1933, pp. 186-187.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 190.

second-language acquisition suggests itself: whereas the natural speech community provides the conditions in which the normal child successfully acquires the habits of that community, in the normal educational setting the conditions for the second-language learner have to be created. Again, whereas the first-language learner is provided with natural remedies, the second-language learner relies on the teacher to create the remedies for his errors. A systematic study of students' errors, the concern of this investigator, would seem to be a logical precursor to planning and implementing corrective measures.

A student who incorrectly derives from decir the morphological form *dijío¹¹ instead of dijo has clearly acquired a part of the system of the preterite tense in Spanish; but, somewhat like the young child, he is making an inappropriate analogy. The *íó inflection, (the accent is misplaced), has been generalized from the regular preterite form of the verbs with the ending ir, such as there is in vivió which derives from vivir. The student is also credited with the correct preterite stem dij. Stockwell, et al, observe that problems of the kind indicated here result from the "internal inconsistency" of the language.¹² Such difficulties as are occasioned by the language itself are known as intra-linguistic.

Other types of problems have been identified. Stockwell, et al, illustrate, for example, that English-speaking students

¹¹Observed student error.

¹²Robert P. Stockwell, J. Donald Bowen, John W. Martin, The Grammatical Structures of English and Spanish, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965, p. 121.

will often produce a structure such as *sí, yo conozco su
novia, omitting after conozco the preposition a which in Spanish
 signals the personal noun used as direct object, and which does not
 exist in English.¹³ Lado refers to the strength of the habit system of
 the native language, and of the tendency to impose the grammatical
 structure on the foreign language.¹⁴ The problems that result from
 this situation are referred to as contrastive or inter-linguistic.

It seems reasonable to assume that the frequency of student
 errors generally parallels the degree of difficulty of the task being
 performed. Allusions to the complex nature of the task of second-
 language learning are scattered throughout the literature. Brooks
 makes reference to this complexity when he states that motor skills as
 well as intellectual activities are involved in language learning and,
 consequently, the teacher's task must be that of developing in the
 pupils

not only ideas and perceptions and values, but also
 complicated patterns of muscular co-ordination and
 habit formation.¹⁵

But the complication does not derive only from the necessary
 synchronization of motor and perceptual skills. The observation made by
 Renaud and Heinle is that

¹³ Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁴ Robert Lado, Linguistics Across Cultures, Ann Arbor: The
 University of Michigan Press, 1957, p. 58.

¹⁵ Nelson Brooks, Language and Language Learning, 2nd ed., New
 York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964, p. 61.

the student is involved in discrimination learning, motor skill learning, concept formation, and probably modification of perception, as well as the high-level cognition required for inducing the internalized grammar necessary for linguistic competence.¹⁶

As noted above, the "internal inconsistency" of the language being learned is a force to be reckoned with. Again, as expressed by contrastive linguistics, the problem of acquisition is compounded by the negative influence exerted by the student's automatic performance in his native language, and by the distinctness of many of the relationships perceived there. The contrastive analysis of the grammatical structures of English and Spanish undertaken by Stockwell, et al, is avowedly the result of "the conviction . . . that one of the major problems in the learning of a second language is the interference caused by the structural differences between the native language of the learner and the second language."¹⁷ This analysis was made on actual errors made by students while speaking.

The present study seeks to identify the two types of errors discussed above, namely, the intra-linguistic and the inter-linguistic. It shares with Stockwell's study the technique of analyzing errors actually made by students, but diverges in that written errors will be analyzed. Since it is hoped that the results of the study will suggest the need for teachers to adopt a deliberate and

¹⁶Center for Curriculum Development in Audio-Visual Language Teaching, Implementing Voix et Image de France, Philadelphia: Chilton Books, Educational Division, 1969, p. 5.

¹⁷Stockwell, et al., op. cit., Introduction, p. v.

scientific approach to the study of students' errors, it may be profitable to discuss in the background to the problem some of the attitudes toward errors.

Some attitudes toward errors

Carlisle claims that

haphazard exposure to English (as a second language) over a prolonged period of time can result in the half-learning of structures and the adoption of substandard language patterns that are a language handicap . . . the handicap of inaccurate fluency that is extremely difficult (if not impossible) to unlearn later.¹⁸

Carlisle's observation seems to imply (i) the existence of a close relationship between the results obtained in second language studies and the teaching procedure employed, and (ii) that the persistence of errors into the more advanced stages of learning may be due, in large measure, to the absence of a deliberate technique for dealing with those errors from the earliest stages of learning onwards. The traditional method of dealing with errors could be related to this implied persistence.

The basic methods utilized, traditionally, involve (i) the indication of mistakes by a mark (usually a red line drawn through, or under, the incorrect forms) and (ii) the red lines accompanied by the insertion of the correct forms by the teacher. Stack vividly records the practice of a teacher who "used to correct

¹⁸ John Carlisle, "Needs in Bilingual Education," Hispania, 54, May, 1971, p. 310.

written homework conscientiously, writing in all the omitted words, making all corrections in full, and using gallons of red ink."¹⁹ (The hyperbole is appreciated). Stack further reports that to this laborious effort students would react by simply discarding the "bespattered documents." The practice of students, in disgust, removing from their notebooks pages containing corrected work returned by their teachers is probably well known. The Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools refers to "The Fever of Marking," to the delusion of the teacher in believing that all the students pay very much attention to what he writes, and to the desperation involved in the "monotonous reappearance of the same mistakes."²⁰

Various suggestions have been offered to make the correction of errors the kind of learning experience which the above procedures do not seem to promote. One of the most popular suggestions is that of developing a "symbolic rapport" between the teacher and his class, whereby the student is stimulated to think through the problems.²¹ Other recommendations focus on limiting the amount of writing,

¹⁹ Edward M. Stack, The Language Laboratory and Modern Language Teaching, rev. ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 181.

²⁰ The Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools, The Teaching of Modern Languages, 4th ed.; University of London Press Ltd., 1967, p. 142.

²¹ Ibid., p. 142; Wilga M. Rivers, Teaching Foreign Language Skills, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 256.

especially free expression, to be done on each occasion,²² selecting only a certain number of the existing problems for treatment at any one time²³ and, where feasible, allowing students to correct their own work under the direction of the teacher.²⁴

The foregoing recommendations are made to accord with the need for expediting the correction process. Appended, however, is the proviso that oral expression is not governed by the principle of immediate correction. Grittner issues a timely reminder:

The teacher must resist the tendency to break in and correct publicly each student attempt at self-expression. Over-correction of young children who are learning their first language can produce stuttering. Over-correction of adolescents who are learning a second language will produce silence.²⁵

The above suggestions for the improvement of correction procedures while admittedly potentially valuable, do seem to lack a certain perspective as they focus primarily on the mechanics of the problem. As noted earlier, a necessary precursor to the actual

²²Mary M. Thompson, "Writing in an Audio-Lingual Modern Foreign Language Program," in Foreign Language in the Schools, ed. by Mildred R. Donoghue, Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1967, p. 219; Rivers, p. 256.

²³The Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary School, p. 148; Harry A. Greene and Walter T. Petty, Developing Language Skills in the Elementary Schools, 4th ed.; Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971, p. 57.

²⁴Meras, p. 21; Diana E. Bartley and Robert L. Politzer, Practice-Centered Teacher Training: Spanish, The Center for Curriculum Development, Inc., 401 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa., (1964), p. 119; Rivers, p. 256.

²⁵Frank M. Grittner, Teaching Foreign Languages, New York, Evanston and London: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1969, p. 246.

manipulation of techniques would seem to be a categorization and analysis of the students' errors in an attempt to discover their sources and their nature.

Thompson's observation that "too many teachers spend too much time correcting mistakes which could be prevented by oral work"²⁶ is representative of the audio-lingual school of thought whose attitude toward errors is vital in a consideration of the background of the problem of this study. The relevant aspects may now be appropriately considered.

As an outstanding proponent of this school of thought, Brooks posits that

error . . . bears a relationship to learning resembling that of sin to virtue. Like sin, error is to be avoided and its influence overcome, but its presence is to be expected.²⁷

On this premise both instructional materials and methodology are developed in such a way as to forestall, as much as possible, the occurrence of mistakes. Following are a few of the relevant formulations which underlie the audio-lingual methodology:

- (1) The single paramount fact about language learning is that it concerns not problem-solving but the formation and performance of habits.²⁸
- (2) Foreign-language habits are most effectively formed by producing the right response to a given stimulus.

²⁶Thompson, in Foreign Language in the Schools, p. 220.

²⁷Brooks, p. 58.

²⁸Ibid., p. 49.

The important point is not to have the student 'construct' correct or half-correct sentences.²⁹

- (3) Language requires the automatic performance of a series of complex motor skills. These can be acquired only by saturation practice.³⁰
- (4) . . . satisfaction or reward . . . serves to reinforce the learning of a particular response in answer to a particular stimulus.³¹
- (5) Language skills are learned more effectively if items of the foreign language are presented in spoken form before written form.³²
- (6) . . . language study . . . is a continuum, a progression from one link of the chain to the next . . .³³

Contrastive linguistics, which delineates the conflicting points between the first language and the second and, by application to second-language learning, predicts the areas of difficulty for the learner, provides the basis for the instructional materials of the

²⁹Robert L. Politzer, Teaching French: An Introduction to Applied Linguistics, Boston: Ginn & Co., 1960, p. 14.

³⁰Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Modern Language Teaching in School and College, Seymour L. Flaxman, ed., New York University, New York, N. Y., 1961, p. 44.

³¹Poltizer, Teaching French, p. 21.

³²Wilga M. Rivers, The Psychologist and the Foreign Language Teacher, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 21.

³³Robert L. Politzer and Charles N. Staubach, Teaching Spanish: A Linguistic Orientation, Boston: Ginn & Company, 1961, p. 30.

audio-lingual programs. These programs are thus designed, reputedly, to obviate or to minimize predicted errors. In examining the majority of the linguistically oriented texts, the reader will at once be impressed by the difference in format compared with that of a traditional text which features extensive reading passages, followed by paired vocabulary lists, then grammatical explanations and written grammatical practice. Characteristic of the linguistic texts are a variety of pattern drills designed for the "saturation practice" referred to in (3) above.

The psychological concept of reward as a motivating element in the learning process features significantly in the design, and does not lack supporters. Holodnak investigated the relative effectiveness of pointing out to students correct responses and errors. She concluded that "learning is more effectively accomplished if the correct responses rather than the incorrect ones are . . . emphasized."³⁴ Bloom states that

Each person searches for positive recognition of his worth and he comes to view himself as adequate in those areas where he receives assurance of his competence or success. For a student to view himself in a positive way, he must be given many opportunities to be rewarded.³⁵

Notwithstanding the laudable aspects of audio-lingual theory, the conception that intensive practice of the patterns of the new

³⁴Helen Barbara Holodnak, "The Effect of Positive and Negative Guidance upon Maze Learning in Children," Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol. 34, 1943, pp. 341-354.

³⁵Bloom, op. cit.

language serves to suppress errors, and therefore to promote the designed language behavior has stimulated a great deal of controversy, much of which falls outside the scope of this study. Significant, however, is the criticism that the audio-lingual method, as prescribed and practiced, hinders, instead of promotes, the attainment of its own target, namely, communicative skill in the language.

Most critics who express dissatisfaction with the outcome of the audio-lingual method do not deny the need for control and practice.³⁶ However, it has been felt that the extreme caution against mistakes, as evidenced in the rigid control of the linguistic material within which students are made to operate, militates against spontaneity of expression. "Saturation practice" may not only fix linguistic forms in the students' minds, but may, according to Rivers, fix students to "stereotyped responses and make it harder . . . at a more advanced level to develop flexibility in handling synonymous phrases and parallel constructions."³⁷ The latter viewpoint derives support from Tolman's claim that "after a response has been learned, over-exercise tends to fix it, making it unduly resistant to change."³⁸ Kennedy-Fraser holds the view that "habits never reach the stage of absolute

³⁶ Richard Barrutia, "Some Pedagogical Dangers in Recent Linguistic Trends, IRAL, Vol. 4, No. 3, September, 1966.

³⁷ Rivers, The Psychologist and the Foreign Language Teacher, p. 66.

³⁸ Edward C. Tolman, cited by Ernest R. Hilgard and Gordon H. Bower, Theories of Learning, 3rd ed.; New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1966, pp. 215-216.

fixity," but alludes to "the tremendous strength and tenacity of a habit once formed."³⁹

The implied paradox of the foregoing, namely, that the strength of a form established constitutes a major weakness in the method which establishes that form, would seem enough to confound the foreign language teacher. To formulate a distinction between sufficient learning and over-learning in the attempt to avoid fixity seems a formidable undertaking. A more productive enterprise appears to be that recommended by James:

one needs to be systematically heroic in little necessary points (and to) do every day or two something for no other reason than its difficulty, so that when the hour of dire need draws nigh it may find you not unnerved and untrained to stand the test.⁴⁰

Current thinking on foreign language teaching can be seen to parallel James' position. Grittner, for example, urges that during each step of the learning process the teacher needs to deliberately involve the students in "the spontaneous creation of utterances which express their ideas."⁴¹ An acknowledgement of the difficulty of this undertaking is implicit in the statements that "errors are bound to be numerous," and that "the teacher must allow a wide tolerance of

³⁹David Kennedy-Fraser, The Psychology of Education, 5th ed.; London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1946, p. 145.

⁴⁰William James, Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on some of Life's Ideals, New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1910, pp. 75-76.

⁴¹Grittner, p. 247.

student errors even though he may secretly note errors for the purpose of assigning subsequent remedial drill."⁴² Miller, Galanter and Pribram, while discussing the problem of "remembering," also infer the difficulty involved in free expression: "storage," they suggest, is far simpler than "retrieval," in verbal learning.⁴³ Training in the latter mode is regarded as a necessity by Rivers, who, like Grittner, foresees the occurrence of mistakes as an unavoidable part of the process.⁴⁴

The choice then would seem to be between communicative skills plus errors on the one hand, and non-communicative skills plus fewer errors on the other. The latter position is already the target of many critics who feel that foreign language teaching, in general, accentuates non-communication. Jakobovits⁴⁵ argues that the method which fragments language into primary skills and secondary skills, and which begins to treat the "paralinguistic features of speech and knowledge of the foreign culture" after the basic linguistic skills are already at a fairly advanced level, reveals a certain misconception about language as a communicative skill. The fragmented quality of language teaching, Jakobovits observes, manifests itself in the

⁴²Ibid., p. 246.

⁴³George A. Miller, Eugene Galanter, and Karl H. Pribram, Plans and the Structure of Behavior, New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1960, p. 137.

⁴⁴Rivers, The Psychologist and the Foreign Language Teacher, p. 77.

⁴⁵Jakobovits, pp. 47-49.

language tests which concentrate on the "constituent elements" of the language: "vocabulary knowledge, recognition of correct grammatical structure, reading comprehension, dictation, translation . . . (which) may be termed knowledge of the mechanics of the language." The constant application of such tests, Jakobovits claims, is indicative of the alledged misconception. He argues that knowledge of only the grammatical elements of a language does not immediately translate into communication, the implication being that absence of ability to perform in the language reflects a defect in competence. This observation of Jakobovits', as has already been shown, is particularly applicable to foreign language learning.

The foregoing argument would seem to be leading the foreign language teacher to an acceptance of the first of the two choices noted above, that is, following a policy which aims directly at training in communication, and contending with the concomitant problem of students making more errors than they would make in a very tightly controlled situation. The implication here is not that the elements of language are to be neglected. Upshur unequivocally comments:

There can be no question but that one does not communicate in a second language without having learned something of the language.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ John A. Upshur, "Objective Evaluation of Oral Proficiency in the ESOL Classroom," TESOL Quarterly, Vol. 5, March, 1971, p. 56.

The focal point is that, following the accepted principle that "language is more than the sum of all its parts," the teacher is being urged to make training in communication deliberate, and not incidental to training for grammatical accuracy.

A corollary to the problem of students erring more in their attempts at free expression is the problem of developing a positive attitude toward errors in the classroom. Observation reveals that because of the human tendency to frown upon mistakes people in general withdraw for fear of slipping. This practice is no less evident in a community of students and teachers where it tends to become disastrous in respect of foreign language learning. Grittner urges a "relaxed, non-pressured atmosphere, realistically asserting that

Laughter is inevitable as students produce non-standard French, German, or Spanish utterances. Teachers and students must accept those blunders as an unavoidable part of the trial-and-error process.⁴⁷

Rivers, too, finds it necessary to caution against ridicule, and to advise the creation of a tension-free atmosphere "if the spontaneous use of the language is not to be inhibited."⁴⁸ The realization of students' free explorations into the language will necessarily depend on the teacher's positive attitude toward errors being transmitted to students both explicitly and implicitly.

One of the remaining roles of the teacher would seem to be that

⁴⁷Grittner, p. 247-248.

⁴⁸Rivers, The Psychologist and the Foreign-Language Teacher, pp. 157-158.

recommended by Moulton, namely, a pragmatic and theoretical approach to the study of errors. The process involves (a) observing and recording the errors, (b) analyzing the structures of the two languages involved, noting points of agreement and disagreement, and (c) predicting errors on the basis of disagreements. Moulton justifies this combined approach on the ground that

In trying to understand the structural reasons which lie behind a given observed error, the investigator gains new theoretical insights, and these in turn lead to a better understanding of other observed errors.⁴⁹

The value of the exercise, Moulton suggests, lies not in the listing of the errors, but in the attempt to determine why they are made. He concludes that "only when the 'why' of the mistakes has been discovered will it be possible to design useful corrective exercises."⁵⁰

The method of contrastive analysis, Moulton's primary proposal, has proved valuable to the foreign language teacher in determining many of the sources of student errors; but, as a review of the literature illustrates, there are many errors which fall outside the scope of such an analysis, among which are the intra-linguistic ones. Besides, being intimately connected with the background experience (linguistic) of his students, the teacher alone may be able to account for some of the difficulties.

⁴⁹William G. Moulton, "Toward a Classification of Pronunciation Errors," Modern Language Journal, Vol. 46, 1962, p. 101-109.

⁵⁰Ibid.

From the total picture presented in the foregoing, the following may be extracted as a summary of the focus of the background problem:

- (1) Learners' errors are a source of information.
- (2) Student proficiency in the foreign language is intimately related to errors.
- (3) Traditional unsystematic approach and negative attitude to errors is suggestive of haphazard teaching procedures.
- (4) Attempt at total avoidance of errors is considered to inhibit the acquisition of communicative skill, and may lead to silence.
- (5) Training in free expression is expected to create more mistakes.
- (6) A positive attitude toward errors needs to be developed by teacher and student.
- (7) The teacher needs to examine errors critically in order to plan appropriate corrective measures.
- (8) A pragmatic and theoretical approach to the analysis of errors is recommended.

II. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Successive reports on the Cambridge General Certificate Examinations in Spanish in Jamaica⁵¹ show a high rate of failure, suggesting that

⁵¹See Appendix A.

students are experiencing learning difficulties.

Students' difficulties are usually reflected in their errors which, as noted earlier, tend to persist if not remediated. These errors may reveal imperfectly learned forms, incorrect analogies being made in Spanish and interferences from the two previously learned languages, English and Jamaican Creole. Such ideas invite investigation.

To investigate whether errors do persist, it seems feasible to examine the responses of students at two different grade levels, designated in the study as "Year II" and "Year IV". Normally the younger group (Year II) would have had enough time for exposure to a reasonable part of what Carroll refers to as the "common core of material which must be learned" in the area of grammatical structure, and which is "relatively fixed" in that area compared with the area of vocabulary.⁵² By the same token the older group would need to have studied the language for at least two years beyond the Year II stage to allow the investigator the opportunity of observing with some clarity (a) which types of errors persist, (b) which ones diminish or disappear and (c) which new ones appear as students approach the completion of their pre-examination year.

Typically, full-scale examinations are held in the Jamaican high schools twice or three times per year. Since these examinations are administered primarily to obtain achievement scores for the records, the students' scripts are usually marked by the teacher,

⁵²Carroll, "Research on Teaching Foreign Languages," in Handbook of Research on Teaching, p. 1072.

assigned individual scores, and subsequently stacked away for a period of time to conform to government regulations. Discussion of the errors, when undertaken, is usually done in an overt manner.

The investigator feels that there is need to demonstrate to teachers that the abandoned scripts contain valuable information which, when examined, could be used effectively to contribute to the development of future teaching methods aimed at eliminating the observed difficulties. Primarily, it seems a matter of urgency to demonstrate that the practice of analyzing and interpreting students' errors is not only applicable to such infrequent examination results, but ought to become integrated into the daily operation, so as to obviate the accumulation of the problems, and the attendant failure.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

(a) Do students of Spanish at the Year IV level experience the same syntactical and morphological problems which are experienced by students of Spanish at the Year II level.

(b) Can the nature of the problems that exist be determined by a linguistic analysis of the errors made.

IV. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The specific purpose of the study is to examine the syntactical and morphological error content of students' written responses in Spanish to examinations constructed and administered by teachers in the normal school situation, in order to determine (1) the similarity, if any, of frequently occurring error types between the Year II

responses on the one hand, and the Year IV responses on the other; (2) which kinds of errors occurring with frequency at the Year II level occur with significantly less frequency, or do not occur, at the Year IV level; and (3) the error types occurring with frequency only at the Year IV level. The study is also directed toward an analysis of the errors from an inter- and an intra- linguistic basis in an attempt (4) to discover the nature of the difficulties.

The overall aim of the study is to derive information which will contribute to the teacher's perspective on errors, which perspective, it is hoped, will lead to individual inquiry, and to the adjustment of instructional practice.

V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study will concentrate on the written errors extracted from students' responses in Spanish to examinations designed and administered by individual schools to two grades of students: those who have been studying Spanish for approximately two and four years respectively. The groups will be designated "Year II" and "Year IV". Two different groups of students will constitute the sample for the study, that is, the groups will currently be in the Year II grade and the Year IV grade respectively.

As will be seen in the design of the study, the unit of sampling will be the task, and not the student. The errors which derive from similar tasks between participating schools within each year will be specifically considered. The study will involve the categorization, analysis and interpretation of syntactical and morphological errors,

focusing on (i) the similar and frequent error types between years, (ii) the frequent error types occurring only within years, and (iii) the source and nature of the frequent grammatical errors examined on the basis of intra-linguistics, and contrastively with the forms of English and with those of Jamaican Creole.

While it is understood that errors are related to performance and, like performance, must be related to several student and teacher variables, the study will be concerned only with errors, that is, independent of these variables. The implication of this restriction is that, with one possible exception, observations will not be generalizable beyond the populations involved in the study. The results obtained will therefore be a description of the error performance of the groups investigated. The nature of those errors which can be clearly accounted for by contrastive analysis and intra-linguistic analysis is the above-mentioned exception to the rule of generalizability.

The writer feels obliged to add that the focus on the written errors is intended to affect in no way the acknowledged importance of speech.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is hoped that the results of this study will serve to demonstrate the need for teachers

(a) to observe the general and specific problems of their students at all stages of the language learning process;

(b) to analyze these problems in an attempt to discover their sources and plan corrective measures;

(c) to take advantage of previous scholarship and research while probing the causes of the difficulties; and

(d) to adopt an instructional policy which gives priority to the elimination of the errors as they occur, and before they become overwhelming problems for both the teacher and his students. It is hoped that the study will yield the kind of information which will help the teacher as he develops his methods to meet the difficulties.

VII. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Operational

Contrastive Analysis. An examination of any two languages to discover similarities and dissimilarities. Also referred to as Inter-linguistic Analysis.

Intra-linguistic Analysis. An examination of students' errors to detect inappropriate transfers of knowledge previously acquired in the foreign language to another situation in the foreign language.

Morphology. Relates to the system of paradigmatic elements within the structures of a language.

Morphological Error. A deviation from the paradigmatic element necessary to effect the intended meaning in a linguistic expression.

Syntactic Error. A deviation from that arrangement of words forming the correct structure of the language.

Concept. A morphological or syntactical aspect of the language.

Error Type. A category which embraces a number of expressions, similar or varying, which are deviations from a particular concept of the language.

Analysis of Errors. An examination of deviations from correct concepts of the language.

Task. An item testing knowledge of a specified morphological or syntactical concept.

Similar Tasks. A number of items testing knowledge of the same kind of morphological or syntactical concept.

Frequent Error Type. Refers to an error score of twenty-five percent or higher yielded by a sample of similar linguistic tasks.

Non-operational

Automatic Performance. An act of speech in immediate response to a linguistic stimulus.

Communicative Skill. The demonstrated ability to converse in the foreign language.

Proficiency. The demonstrated ability to converse fluently with a native speaker in the foreign language.

Saturation Practice. That which involves learning intensively, through repetition, memorization and manipulation, the structures basic to the foreign language, so that responses may be freed from the intrusion of the habits of the learner's native language. Also known as Pattern Practice.

VIII. ASSUMPTIONS

It may be recalled that Carroll indicates that the "common core of material" which must be learned in the area of grammatical structure is relatively fixed. Politzer alludes to the necessary reduction to simple constructions of complex material contained in some new texts, for the purpose of drills and analysis.⁵³ Belasco observes that audio-lingual materials "are not markedly different from the grammatical principles utilized in the grammar-translation method. The method of presentation is different but the kind of structure taught is essentially the same."⁵⁴ On the basis of these observations strengthened by the writer's knowledge of the Spanish textbooks generally used in the Jamaican high schools, the assumption is being made that the grammatical materials to which students have been exposed

⁵³ Politzer and Staubach, Teaching Spanish, Waltham, Massachusetts: Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1965, p. 16.

⁵⁴ Belasco, "Nucleation and the Audio-Lingual Approach," Modern Language Journal, Vol. 49, No. 8, December, 1969, pp. 483.

will relate to similar concepts within and between years.

Assumptions relating to the performance of the tasks are (i) that the examinations were administered according to the procedures normal for the Jamaican high schools, that is, that the examinations were closely supervised, that students had no access to textbook or notebook materials, and that each paper was written at one sitting and within the time specified; (ii) that the tasks were related to previous instruction; and (iii) that the directions for performing the tasks were clearly understood by all the students.

The justification of the designations "Year II" and "Year IV" is assumed from previous knowledge, corroborated by information obtained from teachers that the number of students who might have studied Spanish before entering high school would be very small, thus affecting only minimally, if at all, the error scores.

In respect of the sampling, it is assumed that items appearing on a single script forming a part of a sample are independent of each other. Notably, identical test items in any one examination rarely, if ever, occur. However, in the event of such an occurrence, the exclusion from the sample of all, but one, of the items should uphold this assumption.

IX. LIMITATIONS

While it is assumed that the test items employed in the study fell within the linguistic operation of the sub-groups, these items are not intended to reflect the scope of the operation. The design of the

study necessitated the selection of similar grammatical tasks, hence the areas of dictation and free composition in both years, and reading comprehension in Year IV had to be ignored. Related to this situation is the variation of the nature of some of the tasks between years.

The Year II examination material facilitated the selection of translation tasks as well as tasks requiring transformations, responses to questions of a conversational type and, to a lesser extent, questions based on reading comprehension, but mainly translation tasks could be successfully derived from the Year IV material. However, this difference seems to be somewhat in keeping with the widely accepted principle of linguistic control during the earlier stages of learning and lesser control at the more advanced stages.

X. NULL HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses have been formulated to direct the study in the attempt to answer the questions stated as the problem:

1. There is no similarity of syntactical error types between the Year II and the Year IV responses.
2. There are no syntactical error types occurring only among the Year II or the Year IV responses.
3. There is no similarity of morphological error types between the Year II and the Year IV responses.
4. There are no morphological error types occurring only among the Year II or the Year IV responses.
5. The frequent syntactical error types are not inter-linguistic.

6. The frequent syntactical error types are not intra-linguistic.

7. The frequent morphological error types are not inter-linguistic.

8. The frequent morphological error types are not intra-linguistic.

The general interest in students' errors already noted in this chapter will be further pursued in Chapter 2 in which the relevant literature is reviewed. The three succeeding chapters in turn are devoted to the design of the study, the reporting and discussion of the results obtained from the data, and finally the conclusions and implications derived from the study. Recommendations for further research complete the final chapter.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I. STUDENTS' ERRORS AND THE TEACHING SITUATION

Partly through documentation and analysis Hodgson treats extensively the subject of errors in second-language learning. In 1955 she writes in reference to the learner of French, German or Spanish:

It is obvious that, whatever our approach, he cannot in a few hours divest himself of the habits of years, but on condition that we as teachers are prepared to face and to assess the difficulties presented by a highly inflected language for a child whose mother tongue is English, and to overcome those difficulties slowly and patiently, it remains to be proved that he cannot, with constant practice, come to have a sound, accurate knowledge of the spoken and written forms needed to express in simple language the every-day happenings that are within the field of his experience.¹

Contending that the difficulties students face warrant the consistent attention of the teacher, Hodgson comments further:

It is because we are blind to the evidence that children themselves give us and refuse to learn the lessons they can teach, that the confusion and lack of interest of the later stages occur. How are we to account for the fact that the same forms make the same mistakes year after year in schools all over the country.²

The classroom teacher is thus expected to be sensitive to the cues which the learners are constantly giving. The suggested

¹F. M. Hodgson, Learning Modern Languages, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955, p. 5.

²Ibid.

sensitivity on the teacher's part is desirable from the standpoint that, of all educators concerned with the process of teaching and learning, it is the alert teacher who is closest to the daily performance of his students. From three particular points of view the sensitive language teacher can assume an important position: (1) he is aware of the peculiar linguistic difficulties of his students, and, therefore, of individual needs; (2) he knows what the typical linguistic problems are for particular groups of children at different stages of learning; and (3) consequent on (1) and (2) he is able to relate his experience to the ideas developed in the field of scholarship and gain further insight into the nature of students' problems. Besides, through keenness of observation, he will be equipped to contribute to existing theory.

The foregoing strongly suggests the need for the language teacher to recognize the autonomy which resides in the learners themselves. This autonomy derives from the simple fact that the students' own rate of learning, the hurdles which limit learning, and the errors which represent half-learned and completely unmastered linguistic forms are crucial to the teaching - learning situation. Therefore, the immediate classroom situation, an association of students and teacher, and, as implied in (1) above, of individual student and teacher, becomes an important variable in the language learning process. Relating a study of students' errors to the classroom situation would thus seem unavoidable.

The recent pedagogical orientation with its emphasis on the

acquisition of the speech habits of the foreign language, and traditional methodology which emphasizes the graphic and analytical aspects (reading and writing, and the learning and application of rules of grammar) are considered basically to form the complex of modern language teaching in the schools. The relationship of the latter mode to the problem of errors will be considered in this section, while the former will form a background to the theoretical discussions of the following section.

Hodgson depicts some of the difficulties encountered by students when performing in the foreign language from the basis of an analytical study of its grammar. The problems spring from what she considers to be a certain confusion of thought among many teachers "who declare themselves convinced of the necessity of abandoning the old, formal approach and of presenting the language to the learner as a living reality, (yet) go on to insist that, particularly in the middle school, there must of course continue to be much drill in the grammar as such."³ The ambivalence contained in this approach would seem to suggest what has been often alluded to as the "stranglehold" of the grammar-translation method on many teachers who themselves are products of that system. In spite of the new orientation to the oral aspects of the language, overt analytical grammar still predominates in the activity of many students, who, as a consequence, experience difficulty in expressing themselves without compounding elementary

³Ibid., p. 13.

mistakes. Hodgson observes that five years of study do not significantly improve the situation, and students fail in both areas of production: oral and written. Many teachers of French will probably confirm from their own experience the following observation which is some indication of the quality of the final product:

It is a common experience to find that a candidate who answers 'Quel âge avez-vous?' correctly with 'J'ai seize ans' will a moment later reply to 'Avez-vous des frères?' by 'Oui, j'avais (or avez?) . . . ' or 'Non, je n'avais (or avez?) pas . . .'⁴

A teacher of Spanish may also recall that his students are sometimes faced with a similar problem of transforming from one aspect of the verb to another. Asked a question such as " ¿A qué hora vienes a la escuela?" they would often reply, "Yo vienes a la escuela . . ."

Hodgson further observes that

in spite of all the time and energy spent by the . . . child in studying the grammar of the language, there is no feeling of what sounds right.⁵

It is hardly to be expected that the "feeling of what sounds right" would thrive in a setting which perpetuates consciously, or otherwise, the classical philosophy of the purpose of language learning, namely, the intellectual development of the learner through analytical processes. The basic classical thought on language underlying the

⁴Ibid., pp. 17-18.

⁵Ibid., p. 33.

traditional approach is reflected in Otto Jespersen's quotation of Stuart Mill:

Consider . . . what grammar is. It is the most elementary part of logic. It is the beginning of the analysis of the thinking process. The principles and rules of grammar are the means by which the forms of language are made to correspond with the universal forms of thought . . . The structure of every sentence is a lesson in logic.⁶

Admittedly, this conception of the purposes of language learning would probably now be considered anachronistic and extreme by most participants of the grammar-translation method. However Politzer⁷ would agree that even in its milder form it does not accommodate the orientation to the formation of the habits of speech which, for Hodgson as well, are necessary to foster the "feeling of what sounds right."

Writing does not appear to be a less formidable task for these students. Here too, observes Hodgson, there is "indisputable evidence that all is not well." The exercise in writing translations is presented as a painful mental process:

When they are translating into the foreign language from the mother tongue and are consciously aware that the grammar they have learnt must here come into action, they endeavour to apply what they know to the particular case in question, and the task of remembering the idiosyncracies of each piece of the jigsaw puzzle proves a formidable

⁶ Otto Jespersen, The Philosophy of Grammar, London: Allen & Unwin, 1924, p. 47.

⁷ Robert L. Politzer, Teaching French: An Introduction to Applied Linguistics, Boston: Ginn and Company, 1960, p. 16.

one . . . very many of them show that they are unequal to the task, because there is too much to remember at one and the same time . . . the strain proves too great.⁸

These students, whose experience is so vividly portrayed, would probably appreciate very well the telling criticism made against Karl Plotz, the rabid nineteenth-century devotee of traditional grammar, whose student is reported as saying that "whenever he and his fellow students were obliged to write a letter, or speak in the foreign language, there arose before their minds 'a veritable forest of paragraphs, and an impenetrable thicket of grammar rules.'"⁹

Continuing her examination, Hodgson indicates specific areas of inadequacy of many students:

masculine adjectives appear with feminine nouns, singular verbs with plural subjects; wrong verb forms abound, tenses are used at random, pronouns are mishandled, inversions are forgotten.¹⁰

The further observation is made that, despite knowledge of grammatical rules, these problems do emerge, thus revealing that there is no evidence of real acquisition of the language.¹¹ It is the kind of

⁸Hodgson, op. cit., p. 20.

⁹Peter Hagboldt, "The Teaching of Languages from the Middle Ages to the Present: A Historical Sketch," in Twentieth Century Modern Language Teaching: Sources and Readings, ed. by Maxim Newmark, New York: The Philosophical Library, 1948, p. 6.

¹⁰Hodgson, op. cit., p. 20.

¹¹Ibid.

knowledge which, reflecting a large number of abstractions, negates rather than facilitates the acquisition of the language skills. Consequently the transfer process to free expression of any kind is laborious and fraught with errors. It is a common experience that students who are able to do grammatical exercises with a great deal of facility may persistently fail in producing good translations and compositions. This is often a source of disappointment to their teachers who expect a carry-over of this level of performance into other language activities.

As indicated in Chapter 1, and as will be discussed later, the problem of transfer from learning the elements of the language is a pervasive one, regardless of the context in which it is discussed. Jakobovits, it will be remembered, sees little connection between free expression and the learning of discrete aspects by way of the audio-lingual method. However, whereas the problem becomes more elusive in that context, it is not difficult to visualize that students, subjected consistently to analytical exercises, may be far removed from the possibility of developing any degree of facility. The following are typical examples of what may constitute the grammatical activity which engages a vast proportion of many students' time and effort:

1) Give the Spanish for:

- (1) He gives it (m.) to me. (2) They give them to us.
(3) I give it to you (familiar). (4) We have given it to you (usted). (5) Give it (f) to me (polite command). (6) I am

going to give them to them. . . .¹²

- 2) Translate the following sentences and then repeat three times beginning with "Todos los días" (with Imperfect Tense), second "Mañana" (with Future Tense) and third "Hoy" (with Perfect Tense):
- (1) Los alumnos llegan a la escuela.
 - (2) La familia visita a sus amigos en Madrid.
 - (3) Los ladrones salen de prisa de la casa.
 - (4) Escribo una carta a mi madre.
 - (5) Pongo el periódico en la mesa del comedor.
 - (6) Los indios bailan para divertir a los turistas.¹³

Despite the recognition of the necessity for drills which these exercises demonstrate, the very mechanical operation which is required of the students could easily defeat the purpose for which the drills are designed. The claim by many people that children do enjoy mechanical and repetitive activity may be upheld with respect to young children and language learning, (and that up to a point), as indicated in much of the literature;¹⁴ but high school students are either

¹²W. W. Timms, A Second Spanish Book, London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1958, p. 32.

¹³Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁴Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963, pp. 122-123; David P. Ansubel, "Adults Versus Children in Second-Language Learning: Psychological Considerations," Modern Language Journal, Vol. 48, No. 7, November, 1964, p. 421; Theodore Andersson, Foreign Language in the Elementary School: A Struggle Against Mediocrity, Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1969, p. 192.

approaching, or have already attained adulthood, at which stages the observation rarely applies. Rivers sees the "repetitive form of innumerable written exercises" as a source of boredom.¹⁵ The evidence reveals however, that students do normally grasp the mechanics involved in an exercise similar to those above, as each task usually requires concentration on only a few points of grammar and the code for performing well in that particular situation is often broken. The second exercise, for example, requires that the genders and numbers of the nouns are noted, the endings of the verbs in their respective tenses are recalled (going through the list of paradigms is often found facilitative), and then the appropriate verb forms are applied to the appropriate nouns. Scores on such exercises are usually high, resulting in teachers being deluded that students are making good progress. The difficulty comes when the grammatical knowledge has to be applied to a set of unrelated sentences with a large number of different problems, or to a whole passage to be translated into the target language. Then the kind of knowledge required is not forthcoming, and the general results are disappointing. Hodgson uses the analogy of a jigsaw puzzle¹⁶ to describe the traditional grammatical method of constructing sentences in the foreign

¹⁵Wilga Rivers, Teaching Foreign Language Skills, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 16.

¹⁶Hodgson, op. cit., pp. 20, 47.

language; Stork uses that of bricklaying,¹⁷ both demonstrating that the multi-dimensional character of language confounds the simplistic attitude of traditionalists who believe that proficiency in the language is an uncomplicated transfer of knowledge about the grammar. Barrutia refers to the demand of a rule-oriented approach for "a perfect memory of grammatical rules. . . (and) a fine power of logical discrimination."¹⁸ The issue becomes even more complicated when, as Rivers suggests, "the most immediate aim is the completion of all the exercises in each lesson and the covering of all the lessons in the book in a given period of time."¹⁹ The relationship of such teaching procedure to the "sub-standard language patterns" observed by Carlisle and already noted in Chapter 1 is immediately apparent.

The generally accepted principle that students learn what they are taught is not supported by all the results, and thus needs modification. Rivers' observation is that "the grammar-translation method is not successful . . . with the less intellectual who muddle through, making many mistakes over and over again and thus building up cumulative habits of inaccuracy which are difficult to eradicate at a

¹⁷F. C. Stork, "Linguistics and the Teaching of Modern Languages," Modern Languages, Vol. 46, No. 4, December, 1965, p. 151.

¹⁸Richard Barrutia, "Some Pedagogical Dangers in Recent Linguistic Trends," IRAL, Vol. 4, No. 3, September, 1966, p. 162.

¹⁹Rivers, Teaching Foreign Language Skills, p. 15.

more advanced stage."²⁰ Such observation finds immediate corroboration in the experience of many students and teachers. Language teaching under such circumstances may become, unfortunately, a screening device creating, unwittingly perhaps, a small intellectual elite.

Sensitive to the need for preserving the student's self-concept, Bloom, as indicated earlier, sees immense psychological value deriving from the successes achieved by the student. "Mastery and its public recognition" are envisaged as providing "the necessary reassurance and reinforcement to help the student view himself as adequate." Being convinced that many of the neurotic symptoms exhibited by students are aggravated by painful and frustrating experiences in school learning, Bloom further observes that "mastery learning can be one of the more powerful sources of mental health."

But change comes very slowly. Simon Belasco, already cited, estimates, in 1970, that "those who manage to learn a foreign language . . . make up less than five percent of the students enrolled in foreign-language courses."²¹ Significantly, he, like Rivers, attributes much of the failure to the practice of "covering" material. He believes that by "shifting the emphasis from covering a relatively indefinite amount of language within a definite period of time, to assimilating a definite amount of language within a relatively indefinite

²⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

²¹ Simon Belasco, "C'est la guerre? Or Can Cognition and Verbal Behavior Co-exist in Second Language Learning," Modern Language Journal, Vol. 54, No. 6, October, 1970, p. 399.

period of time, more effective results could be realized."²²

Ensuring that students assimilate a definite amount of language implies an approach to teaching which recognizes that language learning is developmental. Hodgson observes that the teacher, recognizing the goal of the enterprise, requires a clear vision of the direction to be followed, which vision includes also a recognition of the need for firm consolidation at every step.²³

The ultimate goal of free expression (oral and written) in the target language does reflect the developmental nature of the learning process and, in its two forms, would seem to be a reliable test of the effectiveness or otherwise of the work that has gone before. In her analysis of the final product yielded by the process, Hodgson suggests that the task of free composition may be frequently beyond the capacity of those students who are equipped only with abstract concepts of the language, and consequently they resort to the patterns of their maternal language.²⁴ Translation as depicted earlier, is often a major problem. But composition writing may be an even more tortuous activity, for the students are here required to select for themselves the material to be expressed as well as the forms and structures of the language to generate cohesive ideas. The

²²Ibid., p. 397.

²³Hodgson, op. cit., p. 82.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 21-22.

results serve to demonstrate once more that

All the individual steps that are essential for the final complex figure are lacking and all they can hope to produce is a confused medley of half-remembered words.²⁵

The foregoing might explain why students customarily regard with dread the prospect of being asked to write compositions, and why teachers shrink from marking them. The teacher's preoccupation may not be so much with the difficulty of assigning an objective grade, the difficulty referred to by The Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary School,²⁶ but with the possibility that the students' performance constitutes another proof that the years of teaching have, for the most part, been unsuccessful.

In dealing with the necessary progression toward free written expression, several authors have recommended the adoption of a strategy which should derive from the recognition that (a) writing ought to develop from speech, and should therefore be preceded by it; (b) the initial stages must be strictly controlled; and (c) the development toward liberated writing must be gradual.²⁷ In addition,

²⁵Ibid., p. 81.

²⁶The Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary School, The Teaching of Modern Languages, 4th ed., University of London Press, Ltd., 1967, pp. 146-147.

²⁷Frank M. Grittner, Teaching Foreign Languages, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969, pp. 271-278; Wilga M. Rivers, Teaching Foreign Language Skills, pp. 240-255.

Hodgson makes explicit the point that "with very little material at their disposal . . . (students) can begin to acquire the habit of linking into a coherent whole, in relation to a particular topic, the elements they know."²⁸ Recognizing the high probability of errors, she builds into the teaching-learning operation a machinery for dealing with them: "the mistakes they (the students) make will indicate where their difficulties lie and where further intensive practice is needed."²⁹ Implied is the affirmation that consolidation is difficult without making allowances for systematic remediation within the instructional framework.

The overall impression deriving from Hodgson's documentation and discussion of some of the errors committed by students in their final examination is that an analytical study of the grammar of the foreign language is not efficacious when the goal of the study is free expression in its oral and written forms. This statement would seem redundant at this point in time several years after the same discovery led to a massive reorganization of teaching practices. The redundancy is, however, only superficial: as late as 1968 the need was felt to investigate into the relative effectiveness of traditional and audio-lingual methods, the latter by and large constituting the

²⁸Hodgson, op. cit., p. 82.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 60-61, 83.

reorganization.³⁰ The kind of behavior which grammatical analysis fosters is not consonant with the functional use of language. Consequently when students attempt to transfer from the former to the latter their inadequacies are manifested in a large number of errors. The language normally produced represents a patchwork of half-learned forms and structures.

It has been pointed out that one of the major characteristics of errors in the foreign language is that they accumulate, with the consequence that it is not uncommon to find elementary ones at the advanced stages of learning. The repercussions suspected are: a low level of proficiency attained by the majority of learners, failure in examinations, disenchantment with foreign-language study, and a high drop-out rate.

The preoccupation of teachers with covering the material contained in the course-book or the text-book has been offered as one of the major reasons for the persistence of students' errors. Such preoccupation is regarded as inconsistent with a determined effort to ensure that what is taught is assimilated, and without assimilation at each stage of the learning process the effort spent by both teacher and student could be almost totally wasted. It is this outcome which necessitates a new orientation on the part of the teacher. Errors do not usually facilitate the assimilation process unless they are

³⁰Robert F. Roeming, "Critique of the Pennsylvania Project," Modern Language Journal, Vol. 53, No. 6, October, 1969, p. 386.

recognized as cues to further work in specific areas at each stage of the teaching-learning endeavour. This observation represents an affirmation of the position that errors, though negative, can be made to contribute positively to the development of teaching strategies directed toward reducing the difficulties of the learners. Attending consistently to errors, the teacher on his part may spare himself the task of having to plan and effect a massive attack on the numerous persistent problems which may loom very large particularly as the final examination approaches. More importantly, perhaps, students may be spared the frustration which normally results from years of unsuccessful attempts at learning.

II. SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF LANGUAGE IN RELATION TO STUDENTS' PROBLEMS

The diversity of opinions on language and the implications for second-language education are contained in what Carroll refers to as a "truly enormous literature" resulting from the extraordinarily complex problem of teaching a second language.³¹ The voluminous nature of the material forces upon the reviewer a necessary selectivity. In consequence, this section deals restrictively with reactions to audio-lingual theory and practice in terms of the problems of the foreign-language learner.

³¹Carroll, The Study of Language, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 168.

The development of the cognitive code-learning methodology is presented as a reaction against the audio-lingual concept of automaticity with its avoidance of the involvement of cognitive activity in the learning process. Chastain and Woerdehoff, investigating the relative effectiveness of the practices deriving from the "Audio-Lingual Habit Theory and the Cognitive Code-Learning Theory" conceive of the former as characterized basically by "(1) the study and manipulation of the structural patterns of the language, (2) the inductive presentation of new material, and (3) the maintenance of the natural order of language learning," and the latter by "(1) the use of exercises designed to teach grammatical understanding of the concepts being introduced, (2) the deductive explanation of the grammar prior to any practice with the structure, and (3) the practice of all the language skills from the beginning of the course."³² The investigators concluded that the results of their study favoured the cognitive code-learning theory, and indicated that its practices were superior to those of the audio-lingual method.³³ John Carroll sees the cognitive code-learning theory as "a modified up-to-date grammar-translation theory," fostering the acquisition of "conscious control

³²Kenneth D. Chastain and Frank J. Woerdehoff, "A Methodological Study Comparing the Audio-Lingual Habit Theory and the Cognitive Code-Learning Theory," Modern Language Journal, Vol. 52, No. 5, May, 1968, p. 269.

³³Ibid., p. 279.

of the phonological, grammatical and lexical patterns of a second language, largely through study and analysis of these patterns as a body of knowledge."³⁴ Observing that the habit theory is out of step with recent developments in psychology, he suggests that a major revision is necessary, "particularly in the direction of joining with it some of the better elements of the cognitive code-learning theory."³⁵ A synthesis of approaches is thus advocated, instead of wholesale rejection of the one, and adoption of the other.

Inherent in the newer movement is the criticism of the lack of meaningfulness in the audio-lingual program of studies. Carroll suggests that "the more meaningful the material to be learned, the greater the facility in learning and retention," observing that "the audiolingual habit theory tends to play down meaningfulness in favour of producing automaticity."³⁶ Perhaps there is some relationship between this alledged tendency and such deviant expressions as the responses to the following questions based on a passage for reading comprehension:

¿Está preocupado el señor López?

* (i) El señor no llega.

* (ii) Se la Señora está muy preocupada.

³⁴ John B. Carroll, "The Contributions of Psychological Theory and Educational Research to the Teaching of Foreign Languages," in Trends in Language Teaching, ed. by Albert Valdman, New York, St. Louis, San Francisco, Toronto, London, Sydney: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966, pp. 101-102.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 105-106.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 105.

¿Qué hora es ya?

* Nunca tarda tanto.

¿En qué mes están?

* (i) En llegar a casa.

* (ii) Sí, la señora va a buscar al señor López.³⁷

Allied to the charge of lack of meaning is the limited faith in yet another tool of the audio-lingual approach, namely, analogy, a term which refers to the process by which the student deduces the relationship between sentence structures and between elements of a sentence structure through much practice and manipulation. The learner is thus expected to formulate his own generalizations about the functions of those elements, until he arrives at the more advanced stage where he is introduced formally to analysis of the language.³⁸ It has been noted that the danger of wrong analogies is a distinct possibility, there being no real safeguards against this. In a non-contrastive analysis of students' errors in English, Richards traces the cause of certain errors to false analogies, possibly deriving from the method (pattern drills) employed in the audio-lingual program.³⁹ Should this observation be further supported, the method could thus be seriously amiss, creating the very problem it strives so

³⁷ Extracts from an examination test paper, and from students' scripts.

³⁸ Rivers, The Psychologist and the Foreign-Language Teacher, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 115.

³⁹ Jack C. Richards, "A Non-Contrastive Approach to Error Analysis," (Paper presented at the TESOL Convention, San Francisco, March 1970), p. 9.

energetically to avoid, that of interference.

The reader may here be reminded of the observation made in Chapter 1 that the second-language learner, like the first tends to make erroneous analogies, but unlike his young counterpart needs the deliberate intervention of his instructor to facilitate the elimination of his difficulties. Carroll suggests that the initial teaching task should not be that of averting false analogies, but that of getting the students to form the grammatical habits upon which analogies (correct and incorrect) can be built.⁴⁰ Barrutia strives for a "prudent eclecticism" which recognizes value in allowing students to discover the structures of the language but also considers the case of the under-achiever, and possibly others, who may be completely incapable of formulating the appropriate rule after a complex structural drill."⁴¹

Another urgent problem is how to effect the transfer of the training undergone in the classroom to the actual situations of life. The question appears to be overwhelming as in the case of Derek Van Abbé who reacts to it in the following way:

At its worst modern (audio-lingual) teaching can equip pupils with a repertoire of phrases learned parrot-wise: there are stories circulating of laboratory-trained pupils who are fluent only along the lines of their training and who break down as soon as the conversation enters unfamiliar territory. So what? Is it not an improvement on the day when all 0-Level students were tongue-tied

⁴⁰Carroll, in Handbook of Research on Teaching, p. 1073.

⁴¹Barrutia, op. cit., p. 163.

the moment they set foot on foreign soil?⁴²

The evasiveness exhibited here by Abbé (though his observation is valid) is not at all typical of many other investigators who conscientiously pursue the problem in order to find a reasonable solution.

It has been suggested that disagreement with audio-lingual habit theories is on two fundamental points, namely, what language is, and how it is acquired, questions related to language transfer.⁴³

The concern for transfer of training bears on the discontent of Noam Chomsky with the audio-linguist's mechanistic approach to language acquisition. Pertinent to the controversy is Chomsky's theory of the creative aspect of language which is mentalistically oriented. The theory is contained in the following statement:

The central fact to which any significant linguistic theory must address itself is this: a mature speaker can produce a new sentence of his language on the appropriate occasion, and other speakers can understand it immediately . . . Normal mastery of a language involves not only the ability to understand immediately an indefinite number of entirely new sentences, but also the ability to identify deviant sentences and, on occasion, to impose an interpretation on them.⁴⁴

⁴²Derek Van Abbé, "The Theory of Audio-Lingual Teaching," in Guide to Modern Language Teaching, ed. by Brian Dutton, A.V.L.A. Publication, No. 1, London: Cassell, 1965, p. 113.

⁴³Chastain, "Audio-Lingual Theory Versus Cognitive Code-Learning Theory," IRAL, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1969, pp. 97-106.

⁴⁴Noam Chomsky, "Current Issues in Linguistic Theory," in The Structure of Language: Readings in the Philosophy of Language, ed. by Jerry A. Fodor and Jerrold J. Katz, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1964, p. 50.

In the light of this concept, Chomsky argues, "rote recall is a factor of minute importance in ordinary use of language,"⁴⁵ a statement which strikes hard at the audio-lingual theory in its advocacy for memorization of structures and mechanical practice of pattern drills.

Chomsky finds support for his views in Cartesian linguistic thought which views man as a rational being possessing language as his primary characteristic, hence being more than a mere automaton. But the possession of speech, Chomsky observes, is not sufficient evidence that man is not machine-like; the real evidence derives from his ability to create speech appropriate to novel situations. Chomsky concludes, therefore, that "a theory of language which neglects this 'creative' aspect of language is of only marginal interest."⁴⁶

Increasingly, advocates of the oral approach to language teaching are urging a greater use of the target language around the lives of the students who, through role-playing, may consequently be drawn more intimately into real linguistic experience. In attempting to find an answer to the problem of transfer others, as will be seen later, prefer to explore Chomsky's theory of the learner's mental linguistic acquisition device, fitting into it the question of students' errors as a strategy toward generalization and internalization of

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 51.

⁴⁶Ibid.

linguistic rules. Others, like John Oller Jr.,⁴⁷ do not entirely agree with Chomsky's position. Noting Chomsky's statement that language is "free from the control of detectable stimuli, either external or internal" Oller argues that "the very principles which . . . (the theory) rejects undoubtedly constitute essential (emphasis in original) ingredients of the innate capacity that the child brings to the learning situation." Contending that "cognitive psychologists have long recognized the importance of man's ability to categorize the elements of his experience," he suggests rather a theory of pragmatics (emphasis in original) to the study of language acquisition. Pragmatics, he says, is defined as the "correspondence of linguistic forms to contexts." To understand complex behaviors we need to consider their contexts. Oller suggests that his concept of pragmatics has implications for foreign language teaching and learning. It indicates that the structures of the language should be presented in meaningful contexts, and that students should be using language in a "paradigm of situations" instead of manipulating a "paradigm of totally unrelated sentences."

The problem of student errors which has been generating very active discussion also reveals differing opinions. The reliability of contrastive analysis as an adequate indicator of students' problems has been seriously questioned. The reader may here be reminded that the theory of contrastive linguistics suggests that the degree of

⁴⁷ John W. Oller, Jr., "Transformational Theory and Pragmatics," Modern Language Journal, Vol. 54, No. 7, November, 1970, pp. 504-507.

difficulty experienced by the learners of the foreign language is representative of that degree of difference between that language and the learners' native language.

While agreeing in principle with the proposition that differences between languages signify difficulties for the learner, Uriel Weinreich sees further linguistic complexities arising from the learner being deluded by the "partial identification" which he detects. Weinreich claims that "it is these natural identifications which are at the root of many forms of interference."⁴⁸ The difficulty which "asistir" and "atender," for example, constitute for the learner of Spanish with an English linguistic background strongly supports Weinreich's observation. While "asistir" carries the meaning of "to attend" in the sense of attending some activity, -a game, school, a conference- "atender" carries that of "to attend" only in the sense of assisting or caring for. For some learners the confusion is complete as the English habit persists. Weinreich's major argument, however, is that a strictly linguistic approach to the study of languages and of the effect one language has on the other when they come into contact, is not adequate to account for all the interferences which result. There are important extra-linguistic factors which intervene: psychological,

⁴⁸ Uriel Weinreich, "Mechanisms and Structural Causes of Interference," in Psycholinguistics: A Book of Readings, ed. by Sol Saporta, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966, p. 382.

social, cultural and political; and thus only an interdisciplinary approach can achieve increased depth and validity.⁴⁹

In view of Weinreich's major observation, which experience validates, it seems all the more urgent that the classroom teacher be aware, not only of general linguistic problems, but also of those problems specific to the situation in which he operates. Though it is expected that broad principles will remain applicable to second-language learning anywhere within the normal school setting, they may fail to identify other major problems exclusive to individual groups.

Aligning themselves against the concept of interference, Newmark and Reibel⁵⁰ oppose a number of statements, including Politzer's view that "For the time being, intensive drill at the points of interference remains our more practical tool in overcoming the obstacles created by the native language habits of the mature speaker."⁵¹ They argue that "excessive preoccupation with the contribution of the teacher has . . . distracted the theorists from considering the role of the learner as anything but a generator of interference." Expressing an aversion to the term "interference," they further contend that though it is obvious that learners will speak a foreign language with many errors which the observer can identify with

⁴⁹Weinreich, "Languages in Contact," in Psycholinguistics, p. 378.

⁵⁰Leonard Newmark and David A. Reibel, "Necessity and Sufficiency in Language Learning," IRAL, Vol. 6, No. 2, May, 1968, pp. 145-161.

⁵¹Politzer and Charles N. Staubach, Teaching Spanish: A Linguistic Orientation, rev. ed., New York: Ginn and Co., 1965, p. 32.

characteristics in the learner's own language . . . the pedagogical implications drawn by linguists have depended on inadequate analysis of the term interference as applied to those phenomena." The learner, as seen by Newmark and Reibel, is doing the best he can, filling in the gaps of his training with what he already knows, because, unlike the child who wants to say only what he is learning to say, the adult learner wants to say what he has not yet learned. The derived pedagogical implication is that language courses should "minimize the conditions that lead to interference by . . . using one language in a set of circumstances consistently distinguished from the set of circumstances in which the other language is used." In addition, the view is expressed that "if every individual point of difference between native and new language had to be taught to adults through carefully structured drills devoted to that point, it would be as impossible to learn a new language as it would be to learn one's native language one bit at a time." The need for training directly in the use of the language for communication is again articulated here.

Wilkins⁵² questions the predictive value of a listing of the areas of differences between languages, arguing that many errors occur outside of linguistic contrasts. He observes that the fairly delimited nature of phonological problems is more amenable to contrastive linguistics than is the extensiveness of the grammatical

⁵²D. A. Wilkins, "Review of Trends in Language Teaching, A. Valdman, ed.," IRAL, Vol. 6, No. 1, February, 1968, pp. 99-107.

problems, which forces the linguist to select. He therefore proposes, as more valuable, "the administration of a suitable diagnostic test or the collation from teachers of facts about student difficulties." These, he claims, will provide ample evidence of known rather than hypothesized student errors. Wilkins assigns some value, however, to contrastive analysis, regarding its function as that of providing the teacher "with information that could aid him in establishing the best possible strategy for overcoming the difficulties."

In a similar vein Sol Saporta⁵³ casts doubt on the superiority of contrastive linguistics over the "talented teacher" who is able to diagnose the errors of his students. All difficulties, he claims, are not consonant with the linguist's conception of differences. He thus considers extreme the implication that "if two languages were exactly alike, then the student would have no problems, regardless of how complex the system was." Although Saporta's observation of the importance of the teacher in identifying other problems is readily acceptable, one may interject, somewhat facetiously, that were two languages exactly alike, there would not be two languages, but one language, hence the elimination of the problem of acquisition for the adolescent.

Whilst admitting that the new linguistic and psychological

⁵³ Sol Saporta, "Applied Linguistics and Generative Grammar," in Trends in Language Teaching, p. 87.

theory (the contrastive) has given a new dimension to the discussion of errors, Corder⁵⁴ expresses surprise at finding that students' errors have not been ascribed the significance which they deserve; the treatment given to them has always been cursory. Corder argues that the new dimension takes the form of giving people "a principled means for accounting for these errors, namely, that they were the result of interference in the learning of a second language from the habits of the first language," a contribution which, he posits, is not impressive since teachers have always been cognizant of where the difficulties are. The conclusion made is that linguistic theory has added nothing new.

In proposing a new attitude toward errors, Corder sees as the desirable methodology one which concentrates on techniques for dealing with them after they have occurred, this implying little value in the preventative strategy recommended by the audio-lingual method. The main thesis of Corder's proposal is that "the learner's possession of his native language is facilitative, and errors are not to be regarded as signs of inhibition, but simply as evidence of his strategies of learning." Accepting the modern psycholinguistic hypothesis that the young child possesses a device which enables him developmentally to construct the grammar of his native language, Corder is also postulating that the foreign language learner is equipped with the same mechanism. The errors made (not the random mistakes) are

⁵⁴S. P. Corder, "Significance of Learner's Errors," IRAL, Vol. 5, No. 4, November, 1967, pp. 161-170.

therefore seen as indication of the level of competence attained by the learner, and of the strategies being employed. Corder further argues that they provide evidence of the system of the language which is being used, and although it is not the right system, the errors should not be considered deviant, but significant. Their significance he continues, can be viewed from the following advantages: (1) through a systematic analysis, the teacher will discover what has been achieved and what is yet to be learned, (2) the researcher is provided with how the learner proceeds in the acquisition of language, and (3) the learner himself tests, through his errors, his hypothesis about the nature of the language he is learning.

Cook⁵⁵ sees a gap in the kind of thinking which views errors in first language acquisition as incompleteness of the grammar and therefore as a test of hypotheses, and those in second-language learning as interferences, and therefore dangerous. He argues that the second-language learner, like the first, must be allowed great freedom to err, a suggestion which contravenes the position taken by the audio-lingual theorists who recommend tight control. Compared with the opinions expressed by the foregoing critics on the limitations of the audio-lingual concept of errors, Cook's attitude appears somewhat extreme, and suggests an absence of caution in extrapolating from first-language learning situation to that of the

⁵⁵Vivian J. Cook, "The Analogy Between First and Second Language Learning," IRAL, Vol. 7, No. 3, August, 1969, pp. 207-216.

second.

In assessing the criticisms against contrastive analysis in terms of students' errors, the reader may note that there is some admission to the advantage of a contrastive approach. It is noteworthy too that the proponents of the approach recognize the value of a pragmatic orientation to students' problems. Lado sees the technique as a tool in the hands of the teacher:

The teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know better what the real learning problems are and can better provide for teaching them.⁵⁶

The orientation discerned here accords with that of Moulton, referred to in Chapter 1, namely, that a combination of the theoretical and the pragmatic is the device which will best facilitate the teacher in the difficult task of language teaching.

Stockwell, et al, assign much value to the classroom as a contributor to the development of linguistic theories:

No one can contribute to its development more rapidly than the linguistically sophisticated classroom teachers, exposed to the errors of students every day and in a position to make new, often surprising and revealing observations about the underlying rules that are in conflict between the two languages.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Robert Lado, Linguistics Across Cultures: Applied Linguistics for Language Teachers, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1957, p. 2.

⁵⁷ R. P. Stockwell, J. D. Bowen and J. W. Martin, The Grammatical Structures of English and Spanish, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966, p. 285.

III. RELATED RESEARCH ON STUDENTS' ERRORS

The search for studies on students' grammatical errors in Spanish as a second language yielded only the work by Stockwell, et al already referred to in Chapter 1. However, a few related studies on French and English errors were found. Their procedures and findings are now reported.

Magdelhayne Buteau⁵⁸ who undertook a pilot study of French errors set out "to test the predicting reliability of contrastive study in second language teaching." She selected as her sample four groups of first year college entrants arranged according to the following linguistic backgrounds: English only, English and French, English and Italian, and English and other languages. She also tested for the influence of Latin on French.

The summary report of the study reads:

The general findings . . . seem to indicate that French sentences that correspond literally to their English equivalents are not necessarily the easiest to learn, that the probability of errors could not be assessed only from the degree of divergence of the two linguistic structures.⁵⁹

Buteau observed that the six most difficult items, answered correctly by about forty-two per cent of the subjects, involved functional relationships that needed to be identified by native speakers as well, so that the correct choice could be made. Of 24 French-speaking candidates 9 and 12 respectively had errors in two of these items.

⁵⁸Magdelhayne F. Buteau, "Students' Errors and the Learning of French as a Second Language: A Pilot Study," IRAL, Vol. 8, No. 2, May, 1970, pp. 133-146.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 139.

At the other end of the scale, the sixteen items which were answered correctly by about eighty per cent of the candidates, could, Buteau points out, all be considered as non-parallel when compared with their English versions. To support this conclusion she gives the examples: "Je ne la trouve pas" which was chosen by 120 of 124 students, and "invitez-les" chosen by only 91. The influence of English was detected in 8 of the 16 cases; for example in the incorrect expression "la mienne est vert."

Other findings were as follows:

1) Intra-linguistic interference occurred frequently in morphology.

2) Interference arose from French over-generalizations. The choice of "Prêtez-moi-la" was seen as resulting from the much wider use of a single object pronoun and the constant adjunction of the strong pronoun "moi" with positive commands. It has been noted that French speakers and learners of French are both influenced by these environmental factors so that they tend to retain the pattern when two pronouns are involved.

3) Analogies were another source of difficulty. High frequency errors were recorded in this area.

4) The highest degree of correspondence of errors appeared in the preposition system, gender and number agreement, and the use of determiners, and there was a high correlation of similar errors between the objective grammar test and the free-expression test, 85% of the students making the same kinds of errors.

Citing as an example the subject-verb sequence which is found both in French and in English, Buteau made the assumption that "the greater the extension of a generalization, the more easily it is learned and applied, because it embraces a large number of similar cases." While not denying that the native language can be facilitative, she speaks in favour of presenting to the student the target language as "a self-contained system," so as to discourage constant reference to the native language as a model.

The general conclusion deriving from the study is that

the concept of similarity has to be considered internally, from the point of view of the French sub-systems, as well as externally, from a comparative point of view with English.⁶⁰

A similar conclusion was arrived at by Libuše Dušková⁶¹ who, noting the criticism that contrastive analysis does not adequately account for errors, and being aware of Corder's and Wilkins' expositions referred to above, undertook a study to determine the sources of students' errors. The subjects of the study were a homogeneous sample of Czech postgraduate students who were studying English. The error analysis was based on written papers. The following were some of Dušková's findings:

1) Interference from the mother tongue (Czech) was plainly obvious in errors of word order and sentence construction.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 140.

⁶¹Libuše Dušková, "On Sources of Errors in Foreign Language Learning," IRAL, Vol. 7, No. 1, February, 1969, pp. 10-35.

2) The prediction made by contrastive analysis of learning problems in the case of linguistic features unknown in the native language was fully confirmed. The Czech students revealed considerable difficulty with the use of the articles, which do not exist in their native tongue.

3) While failure to use the article might be attributed to interference from Czech, the use of the definite article instead of the indefinite or the zero article is probably due to interference between the various functions of the articles themselves. Intra-linguistic interference was observed in other areas as well, for example, in agreement between subject and verb.

4) The morphological errors caused by interference from Czech were very few compared with those attributed to confusion with English forms: 19 of the former out of 166 systemic errors.

These findings agree with the summary that sources of interference are both inter- and intra-linguistic in respect of large groups of errors. Dušková perceives continuing value in contrastive analysis which, she suggests, might be profitably supplemented with results from error-based analyses, especially in the preparation of teaching materials. By alluding to the general recognition of the usefulness of the device as a means of preventing and remedying errors, she further underscores the point of such value.

Richards⁶² undertook a non-contrastive study of grammatical

⁶²Richards, op. cit.

errors observed in the acquisition of English as a second language. His material consisted of a cross-section of the samples of errors committed by learners of different linguistic backgrounds and recorded by previous studies. Richards focused on intra-lingual and developmental errors which he presents as those errors which "do not derive from transfers from another language, and which cannot be predicted from contrastive analysis." To locate the non-contrastive errors he recommends identifying first those instances where the characteristics of the mother tongue are being carried over into the foreign language.

The study resulted in an identification of both intra-lingual and developmental errors. The former reflected faulty generalization as expressed in "he can sings," "we are hope," "It is occurs," ignorance of rule restrictions in "The man who I saw him," "I made him to do it," and incomplete application of rules as seen in the failure to transform correctly from the question to the statement. Examples of the last-mentioned are, "What does she tell him?" "She tell him to hurry," "What was she saying?" "She saying she would ask him." Developmental errors revealed the building up from limited experience of hypotheses reflecting "faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language." For example, was interpreted as a marker of the past tense might have given rise to an expression such as "one day it was happened," and correspondingly is might have produced "He is speaks French."

Richards' conclusion expresses the consensus, though not the

total opinion of theoreticians and researchers on the nature of learners' errors with respect to inter-language and intra-language difficulties:

Interference from the mother tongue is clearly a major source of difficulty in second language learning, and contrastive analysis has proved valuable in locating areas of interlanguage interference. Many errors however derive from the strategies employed by the learner . . . and from the mutual interference of items within the language.⁶³

Richards further observes that unlike instructional methods and materials children's mistakes and their explanations have not been given adequate attention, and urges that teaching techniques and materials take into account the "structural and developmental conflicts that can come about in language learning."

Opinions expressed in the review of the literature make obligatory for the second-language teacher the function of being consistently aware of the difficulties students encounter in the process of acquiring the language. The nature of students' learning problems has been generating active discussion, and much controversy centres on the question of errors and linguistic interference. Research has identified first- and target-language interference in the learning process, and has underlined the pedagogical value of students' errors. Accordingly, the study about to be reported sought to determine the kinds of grammatical errors frequently made in Spanish at two grade levels in the high school. The identification

⁶³Ibid., p. 22.

of the linguistic nature of these errors was a vital part of the design of the study.

CHAPTER III

THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to determine (i) what grammatical errors are made by students in Spanish at two different grade levels in the Jamaican high school, a lower level and a higher level, and (ii) the linguistic nature of those errors. The investigation was stimulated primarily by the very low level of success attained by students in their final examinations in Spanish. (See Appendix A). A major emphasis of the preceding chapters is the need for greater effectiveness in the field of second-language education. The errors students make are conceived of as a valuable source of information which could direct the teacher toward adopting more productive teaching practices. The teacher's own diagnosis of those errors is viewed as a necessary complement to contrastive (theoretical) analysis which, although helpful, has been found an inadequate technique since it fails to identify a large number of errors which occur in practice. Among the non-contrastive errors are the intra-linguistic ones which, presumably, a teacher-analysis would be able to detect. (See page 24 for definitions of contrastive and intra-linguistic errors). An approach which combines the practical and the theoretical in attempting to identify the nature of students' difficulties has been adopted as the format for this study.

The practical aspect of the design was regarded as particularly appealing from the standpoint that a study of this nature could be relevant to the immediate classroom situation. Students' examination scripts were known to be available at the high schools. These were

envisaged as providing valuable material for analysis of learning problems. In conformity with government regulations all Jamaican high schools construct examinations in all academic subjects and administer them to all the grades twice or three times per year. Possible exceptions in terms of the numbers of these examinations written are the students of grades V and VI who normally sit the General Certificate of Education Examinations governed by the Cambridge Syndicate (external examiners) at the end of the academic year. The primary aim of the local examinations is to obtain achievement scores for students' records. The regulations require, however, that the scripts be preserved for at least one year subsequent to the time the examination was written.

On the theory that errors accumulated over the years could be a contributory factor to the high rate of failure on the Spanish examinations noted above, the investigator chose as the basis for her study Spanish scripts from two different grade levels, namely, form II and form IV. The study was designed to examine the errors made by the students on their normal examinations, the purpose, as expressed before, being to determine the difficulties experienced by each group, to identify persistent problems and the linguistic nature of those errors. The study was confined to the written errors made in the areas of syntax and morphology.

THE POPULATIONS AND GATHERING OF THE DATA

The populations in the study are of two kinds: (i) the accessible student populations providing the scripts containing items to be examined, and (ii) several populations of item types from which the

samples of items were drawn for the examination of the errors. Each kind of population is described in turn.

The student populations:

The populations of 205 form II students and 181 form IV students were provided by five high schools in two urban centres some twelve miles apart, Kingston and Spanish Town. Two of the schools were single-sexed (girls) and three co-educational. While it is expected that students of varying social and economic backgrounds would be found in all the schools, the location and/or traditions of a school tend to suggest the predominant nature of its population. The respective schools are thus judged to be characterized as follows: one school is fed by the lower socio-economic group, two by the middle and lower groups, one by the middle group and one by the upper and middle groups. The accessible population thus embraces a wide range of students although it does not claim to be representative of the total high school population in these two cities.

In the Spring of 1971 the mid-session examination test papers were obtained from each of these schools. The two groups of students involved were designated "Year II" and "Year IV" and the age ranges were, respectively, twelve to fourteen years and fourteen to sixteen years. These students had been studying Spanish for approximately two and four years respectively. The investigator was satisfied that the number of students who might have studied Spanish before entering the respective high schools would be very small, and would therefore not affect materially the error scores to be derived from the scripts.

Table 1 presents the composition of the Year II and the Year IV student populations.

The students within a year are divided into subgroups, each subgroup corresponding to the particular examination which it wrote. A subgroup is identified by the letter designating its school. The letter "F" distinguishes Year IV from Year II. It will be observed that School A produced one Year II subgroup (A) with 53 students but two Year IV subgroups (FA and FAA) with 27 and 24 students respectively; School B produced one Year II subgroup (B) with 30 students and one Year IV subgroup (FB) with 31 students; and so on.

The students' achievement scores resulting from the mid-session examinations in Spanish and English taken in their second year in high school were obtained from the respective schools. These scores ($N_1 = 204$ and $N_2 = 163$) were analyzed to test for statistically significant differences between the Year II and the Year IV populations by means of a one-way analysis of variance program on the IBM 360/67 computer.

The one-way analysis of variance is used "to test the significance of the differences between the means of a number of different samples. (Ferguson, 1966, p. 281). Kerlinger (1970, Chapter II) explains that in the analysis two variance estimates, the between groups variance and the within groups (or error) variance are pitted against each other to arrive at the variance (F) ratio. Ferguson points out that "a departure of the variance ratio from unity is indicative of a difference between variances, the greater the departure the greater the difference." Consequently, a test of the significance of the departure of the ratio of the two variance estimates from unity will serve as a test of the

TABLE I
STUDENT POPULATIONS OF YEAR II AND YEAR IV

School	Year II		Year IV	
	Sub-group	No. of Students	Sub-group	No. of Students
A	A	53	FA	27
			FAA	24
B	B	30	FB	31
C	C	31	FC	21
D	D	59	FD	56
E	E	32	FE	22
	Total:	205		181

significance of the difference between the means of the two samples (p. 181).

Two assumptions underlying the analysis of variance are:

(1) normality of the distribution of the variable within the two independent populations, and (2) homogeneity of variance, that is, equality of the variances of the two populations. Ferguson observes that "reasonable departures from the assumptions of normality and homogeneity may occur without seriously affecting the validity of the inferences from the data," -- a distinct advantage of the analysis of variance. (p. 295).

As reported in Table II the test on the means of the Spanish scores yielded an F ratio of 0.06 with a probability level of 0.81 indicating no significant difference between the Year II and the Year IV groups. A homogeneity of variance test on these data yielded a χ^2 with a probability of 0.25, permitting the inference that there is no significant difference between the variance of the two groups.

Table III reveals that the English scores yielded different results. A χ^2 with a probability of 0.003 resulted from the test for homogeneity of variance, indicating that the homogeneity of variance assumption is violated for these data. However, the test on the means yielded a variance ratio of 8.69 with a very low probability level of 0.003, suggesting that while one of the assumptions of the F statistic is violated, a significant difference between the means of the two groups might still be present.

The reasons for the discrepancy between the Spanish scores and the English scores have not been identified, and will not be pursued in this study. The urgent question underlying the analysis of variance

TABLE II

SUMMARY OF ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR SECOND YEAR
SPANISH SCORES

Source of variation	MS	df	F	p
Between groups	24.0	1	0.06	0.81
Within groups	402.5	365		
Homogeneity of variance $\chi^2 = 1.35$ $p = 0.25$				

TABLE III
SUMMARY OF ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR SECOND YEAR
ENGLISH SCORES

Source of variation	MS	df	F	p
Between groups	1618.0	1	8.69	0.003
Within groups	186.2	365		
Homogeneity of variance	$\chi^2 = 8.80 \quad p = 0.003$			

test was whether the present Year IV group of students were similar to the Year II group when the Year IV students were in their second year of Spanish in the high school. For this reason the Spanish scores were considered primary. The English scores were considered to be supportive. The results of the tests on the Spanish scores reveal that the groups do not differ essentially and, consequently, the inference may be made that the differences between the error performances of the two groups may be attributable to the instructional practices employed with the Year IV group in the two subsequent years. Therefore on the strength of the results obtained for Spanish it seems legitimate to proceed with the comparison between the present Year II and Year IV groups.

An underlying assumption of this study is that all the students, irrespective of the instructional methods employed in the schools, are exposed to the basic grammatical structures, both syntactic and morphological, normal for beginning language students. Knowledge of the textbooks commonly used in these schools coupled with observations of scholars in the field of foreign-language education (see page 26) strongly supports this assumption. Further, it is assumed that the examinations designed as achievement tests were related to previous instruction and that the examination procedures characteristic of the Jamaican high schools were observed in each case. (See page 27).

The populations of item types

In order to arrive at the sampled item types for the examination of errors, the Year II test papers were treated independently of the

Year IV papers. The same procedures were however followed in both cases. All the test papers pertaining to one of the years were carefully examined in order to identify between or among them item types testing the same syntactical or morphological concept. (For definition of "concept" see page 25). Although by and large the test papers themselves suggested the particular concepts, the investigator's experience of likely areas of difficulty was found to be facilitative in the process of identification of the relevant concepts.

The following kinds of items, in order of priority, were selected to form the total possible population related to a concept:

(i) identical test items from different subgroups as, for example, ¿Dónde vive Vd.? testing students' control over longer constructions taken from both subgroups A and C;

(ii) varying items (item types) from different subgroups as in the case of ¿Cuántas personas hay en su familia?, ¿Cuántas pizarras hay en su clase? and ¿Cuántas personas hay en tu familia? testing the use of hay and taken from A, C and D respectively;

(iii) varying items from the same subgroup such as A's items ¿Dónde está la pizarra? and ¿Quién está detrás de Vd.? testing the use of Ser and Estar. The justification for this group of items was regarded as resting on the observation that often students learn and apply a linguistic form in one situation or environment but not in another. For the purposes of the sample these items were assumed to be independent of each other.

Other criteria adopted for the selection of items were as follows:

(i) In order for item types to be considered they had to appear in the scripts of at least two subgroups.

(ii) No less than one hundred possible item types identified as relating to a concept were randomly selected from the total possible number which was the aggregate of all the items in the scripts. It was thought that this number of one hundred, taking into account any omissions, would be sufficient to reliably indicate the error trend of the total population. The sample size drawn from an aggregate of items was 100, 150 or 200, the particular sample size being roughly proportional to the size of its population.

(iii) An item type was selected repeatedly according to the number of concepts it was seen to contain.

(iv) Only one of two or more identical items testing the same concept in one subgroup was included in a given population of items.

It is to be noted that the Year II subgroup E was not included in the majority of the item populations since the examination tasks, unlike those of the other groups, involved primarily exercises in composition and were rarely of a discrete nature.

As a general rule each sample of item types pertained to only one syntactical or morphological concept. However, in the case of Time Clusters examined for both syntactic and morphological errors the same sample was used in each situation since the same item types were involved.

From the corpus of scripts expected to contain the item types related to a specific concept, a random sample of 100, 150 or 200 items was drawn. The items within the sample were then examined and the errors

recorded.

Recording of the errors

All errors and instances of unperformed tasks were recorded. A response to a task was considered an error if it deviated from the expected response. Two types of errors, although recorded, were not included in the calculation for the purpose of determining the error score. They were:

(i) errors which clearly demonstrated knowledge of the concept being tested. A case in point was the production of *el segundo tiempo instead of la segunda vez on an item testing noun-adjective agreement. The teacher of Spanish will immediately recognize accurate knowledge of the concept but also the evidence of an important inter-linguistic lexical difficulty.

(ii) errors not related to the concept being tested, for example, the form *yo querre expressed instead of necesito in response to a task involving the morphological concept of regular verbs. The wrong lexical choice of querer removed the response from the immediate morphological category.

Responses which occasioned any doubt in the mind of the recorder were referred for authenticity to educated native Spanish speakers of different dialectal backgrounds.

A distinction had to be made between a task that was not performed and one that was omitted, since the latter was interpreted as indicative of a misconception. An unperformed task was inferred from a blank space. A sentence with no blanks but in which the concept

being tested was ignored, was considered an error. Typical of the latter were several instances of the omission of the object pronoun.

The decision was made to regard the inappropriate omission or insertion of the accent mark as an error only with respect to the verb, since the written accent functions vitally in the complex verb system of the language.

TREATMENT OF THE DATA

Two error rates were computed from the number of errors yielded by each sample of item types. One was computed on the number of tasks that were actually performed and the other on the total possible number of items in the sample. For example, if out of a sample of 100 possible items 75 errors were recorded and 10 items were not done, the proportion of errors deriving from the tasks that were actually performed would be $\frac{75}{90}$ or 0.83, and the proportion on the sample, $\frac{75}{100}$ or 0.75. There is therefore a difference in the proportions. In order to avoid the anomaly resulting from varying numbers of unperformed tasks, it was considered reasonable to report and discuss the results as expressed by the first proportion, that is, 0.83. For the benefit of the interested reader the other is included in the appendices B and C. The proportion of unperformed tasks in relation to each sample was also computed. These results are reported but not specifically discussed in the following chapter.

The significance of the difference between each pair of proportions of errors derived for similar concepts between the Year II

and the Year IV groups was tested by Fisher's test for the significance of the difference between two independent proportions. (Ferguson, 1966, discusses the statistical procedures). The critical values adopted were $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$.

Each error rate was weighed against a criterion proportion of twenty-five per cent in order to assess the level of difficulty of each concept. For the purposes of the study a grammatical concept yielding at least twenty-five per cent error is viewed as being of reasonable difficulty for the learners and requiring some deliberate remedial effort by the teacher. Such an error rate would seem to indicate the presence of some element of difficulty of which the teacher might not have been aware during the instructional process. The recommendation by test theorists of a fifty per cent level of difficulty on multiple-choice items noted by Ebel¹ is not considered applicable for a number of reasons. The higher percentage does not seem to accord with the objective of language mastery for the greatest possible number of students. Valette reports the acceptance of a criterion requiring 90 per cent of the students in a class to obtain a 80 per cent score on a test before they are introduced to new material.² Acceptance of a fifty per cent error rate would mean ignoring many recurrent and persistent problems inhibiting the attainment of communicative skill in the foreign language. Lado allows for a 0.05 error rate among

¹Robert L. Ebel, "Content Standard Scores", Educational and Psychological Measurement, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1962, pp. 15-26.

²Rebecca M. Valette, "Teaching for Mastery: The Role of Classroom Testing," The Forum, Vol. 2, No. 2, May, 1970, pp. 17-22.

native speakers.³ A fifty per cent rate is far removed from the near-nativeness to which foreign language programs are expected to aspire. Considering the twenty-five per cent level of difficulty as a base line is more in keeping with an error analysis directed toward demonstrating the need for greater sensitivity to students' errors. Furthermore, none of the items examined were of the multiple-choice type, and it is therefore doubtful that the same criterion would be applicable.

Error types occurring with a frequency of at least twenty-five per cent were accepted as the focus of the study, and classified for inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic analysis. Error types below this frequency are indicated but neither classified nor analyzed linguistically. The opinion that an error analysis should be based primarily on recurrent errors made by a number of learners is considered acceptable.⁴ In order, however, to limit the number of error types to be examined in this study, the twenty-five per cent limit noted above was arbitrarily adopted.

Errors pertaining to a particular concept were classified according to the nature of the problems they were perceived as suggesting. Since an error could be seen as reflecting two or more difficulties, the classes that emerged are not mutually exclusive in all cases. This observation will be elaborated upon in Chapter IV.

³Robert Lado, Language Testing, London: Longmans, 1965, p. 348.

⁴Libuše Dušková, "On Sources of Errors in Foreign Language Learning", IRAL, Vol. 7, No. 1, February 1969, p. 16.

The references used in supporting the linguistic analysis of the data were Stockwell, et al (1969), Politizer, et al (1965), Ramsey (1954), Bailey (1966) as well as native speakers of Jamaican Creole. It is to be noted that Jamaican Creole is not formalized into a written language, hence the occasional need to verify, through several native speakers, the actual structures used.

The results of the data are presented and discussed in four parts in Chapter IV. Parts A and B deal respectively with the quantitative analysis of the syntactic and morphological errors. Parts C and D respectively are devoted to the linguistic analysis of the frequent syntactic and morphological error types. The grammatical terminology employed in the linguistic analysis is primarily traditional in order to facilitate those teachers without training in modern linguistics.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hypotheses stated in Chapter I provide the framework for the reporting and discussion in this chapter of the information derived from the data. Sequentially corresponding to the hypotheses, the presentation is made in four parts, each subdivided into two sections.

Part A analyzes quantitatively the syntactical error types. Part A (i) treats statistically the data pertaining to similar syntactical error types obtained from the Year II and the Year IV responses. These errors resulted from items testing the same syntactical concepts. Part A (ii) analyzes two different groups of syntactical error types: those obtained from only the Year II responses and those from only the Year IV responses. The term "dissimilar" qualifies these error types.

Part B analyzes quantitatively the morphological error types. Part B (i) examines statistically the data related to similar morphological error types between the years, Part B (ii) deals with the dissimilar morphological error types.

On the basis of a criterion error rate of 0.25 the syntactic and the morphological concepts in Parts A and B are assessed in terms of their relative difficulty for the learners. (See p. 80).

Part C examines linguistically the error types occurring with a frequency of at least twenty-five per cent, the aim of the analysis being to determine inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic interference.

(For a definition of these two terms see p. 24).

Part D examines the morphological error types occurring with similar frequency in order also to identify inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic interference. The comparison between Spanish and the previously acquired languages of the learners, English and Jamaican Creole, forms the basis of the inter-linguistic analysis in Parts C and D.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

PART A (i): QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SIMILAR SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES

The similar Year II and Year IV syntactical error types yielded by the data are related to four concepts: Articles, Personal a, Prepositions omitted or inserted and Ser and Estar. The reader is reminded that this result does not deny the possible existence of other similar syntactical error types between the years. The exclusion from the data of all item types numbering less than one hundred, and of item types present in the material of only one subgroup implies that other similar error types might not have been identified.

To analyze statistically the relationship between the Year II and the Year IV error rates on each of the similar concepts a restatement of hypothesis 1 to embrace four sub-hypotheses was deemed obligatory. The revised construct is as follows:

Relating to (a) Articles (b) Personal a (c) Prepositions omitted or inserted (d) Ser and Estar there is no significant difference between the similar syntactical error types observed in the Year II and the Year IV responses.

Table IV presents the between-year proportions of the similar syntactical error types and the levels of significance of the differences between the proportions. The critical values adopted are $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$.

As observed in Chapter I the differing nature of some of the tasks between years is regarded as a possible limitation of the study, but the more advanced status of the Year IV group suggests a mitigating element. However, the interpretation of the relationship between the proportions should take into account the possible effect of differences in the nature of the tasks. (To avoid duplication the syntactic tasks are presented in Part C where they more appropriately belong).

The results of the data as presented in Table IV indicate the rejection at the $p < 0.01$ level of significance of the hypothesis 1 (a) predicting no significant difference on the concept of the articles. Similarly, hypotheses 1 (b) and 1 (d) dealing, respectively, with the personal a and ser and estar were rejected, but at the $p < 0.05$ level. Hypothesis 1 (c) relating to prepositions omitted or inserted was not rejected, the proportions revealing no significant difference between the years.

Each of Tables V to VIII shows (a) the composition of the particular population from which each sample of items related to a concept was drawn, (b) the error rate recorded as a proportion of the number of tasks that were actually performed and (c) the score of unperformed tasks recorded as a proportion of the total possible number of items in the sample. It may be reiterated for the reader's benefit that in attempting to obviate the irregularity resulting from

TABLE IV

TESTS OF SIGNIFICANCE BETWEEN PROPORTIONS OF SYNTACTICAL
ERROR TYPES RELATED TO SIMILAR CONCEPTS FOR
YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Concepts	Proportions of Errors		Difference Between Proportions (z values)	Levels of Significance
	Year II	Year IV		
1. Articles	0.60	0.83	5.97	$p < 0.01$
2. Personal <u>a</u>	0.61	0.77	2.39	$p < 0.05$
3. Prepositions Omitted or Inserted	0.49	0.61	1.51	N.S.
4. <u>Ser</u> and <u>Estar</u>	0.42	0.58	2.01	$p < 0.05$

TABLE V

PROPORTIONS OF SIMILAR SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES RELATED TO
ARTICLES FOR YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Years	Sub- groups+	Possible No. of Items	
II	A	53	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks = $\frac{43}{72} = 0.60$
	B	30	
	B	30	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample = $\frac{28}{100} = 0.28$
	C	31	
	D	59	
	Total	203	
IV	FA	27	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks = $\frac{75}{90} = 0.83$
	FAA	24	
	FAA	24	
	FC	21	
	FC	21	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample = $\frac{10}{100} = 0.10$
	FD	56	
	FE	22	
	FE	22	
	FE	22	
	Total	239	

+ A sub-group is identified with the particular examination
which it wrote.

TABLE VI
PROPORTIONS OF SIMILAR SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES RELATED
TO PERSONAL a FOR YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Years	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items	
II	A	53	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks = $\frac{57}{93} = 0.61$
	B	30	
	B	30	
			Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample = $\frac{7}{100} = 0.07$
	Total	113	
IV	FA	24	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks = $\frac{67}{87} = 0.77$
	FA	27	
	FAA	27	
	FD	56	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample = $\frac{13}{100} = 0.13$
	FE	22	
	Total	156	

TABLE VII

PROPORTIONS OF SIMILAR SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES RELATED TO
PREPOSITIONS OMITTED OR INSERTED FOR YEAR II AND
YEAR IV

Years	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
II	A	53		
	A	53		
	A	53		
	B	30	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{36}{74} = 0.49$
	B	30		
	B	30	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{26}{100} = 0.26$
	D	59		
	Total	308		
IV	FA	27		
	FA	27		
	FC	21	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{51}{84} = 0.61$
	FD	56		
	FD	56	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{16}{100} = 0.16$
	FE	22		
	Total	209		

TABLE VIII

PROPORTIONS OF SIMILAR SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES RELATED
TO SER AND ESTAR FOR YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Years	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
II	A	53	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{38}{90} = 0.42$
	A	53		
	A	53		
	B	30	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{10}{100} = 0.10$
	D	59		
	D	59		
	Total	307		
IV	FA	27	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{45}{78} = 0.58$
	FA	27		
	FB	31		
	FC	21	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{22}{100} = 0.22$
	FC	21		
	FD	56		
	FD	56		
	FE	22		
	FE	22		
	Total	283		

varying numbers of unperformed tasks it was considered reasonable to base the discussion on the numbers of items that were done. Proportions computed on the total possible number of items in the respective samples are included in Appendix B.

As seen in Table V the proportion of errors yielded by the sampled Year II population of items testing the concept of the articles is 0.60, and that yielded by the Year IV population is 0.83. Examination of Table IV reveals that of the four corresponding concepts the articles offer the greatest difficulty to the Year IV students. The negligible difference between the two highest Year II rates (0.60 and 0.61) suggests that the articles and the personal a may be classified together as being highest in difficulty for the Year II students. The $p < 0.01$ level of significance at which the hypothesis was rejected points to the greatest disparity between the years in terms of the difficulty of the articles.

Table VI shows that the Year II items related to the personal a reveal an error rate of 0.61, and those for Year IV a rate of 0.77. The Year IV proportion indicates a reduction of the disparity between the years noted above. This observation is supported by the significance level of $p < 0.05$ for the difference between the two years.

As reported in Table VII the proportions derived from items testing the omission or insertion of prepositions are 0.49 for Year II and 0.61 for Year IV. These proportions indicate no significant difference between the years, suggesting that both groups of students experience a similar degree of difficulty with this class of

prepositions. However, less difficulty is suggested for the Year II students by the difference of 0.12 between the proportions.

It is noteworthy that the Year IV proportion of 0.61 parallels the highest Year II proportion. This observation points to the tendency of the Year IV students to make proportionally more errors.

Table VIII shows that the respective Year II and Year IV proportions yielded by items related to ser and estar are 0.42 and 0.58. The $p < 0.05$ level of significance registered by the difference between the proportions suggests that for the Year II students the concept appears to be less difficult.

The data reveal that of the four similar concepts ser and estar is the least problematic for both groups of students. Close examination of the error rates reveals, however, that ser and estar (0.58) appear to be only slightly less difficult than the omission or insertion of prepositions (0.61) for the Year IV students. The proportions differ by only 0.03. The Year II proportions (0.49 and 0.42) differ by 0.07, suggesting that for Year II the two concepts are slightly less comparable in terms of difficulty than they are for Year IV.

The following hierarchy of difficulty is suggested by the proportions yielded by the Year II responses: first, articles and personal a (0.60 and 0.61, the difference of 0.01 being considered negligible); second, prepositions omitted or inserted (0.49); and third, ser and estar (0.42). The following order is suggested for the Year IV students: first, articles (0.83); second, personal a (0.77); third, prepositions omitted or inserted (0.61); and fourth,

ser and estar (0.58).

In sum, the following points appear to be noteworthy:

(1) Three of the four concepts result in the same order of difficulty for the two groups of students. The respective positions of the other, namely, the personal a appearing as first for Year II and second for Year IV are also notably very close. This observation would seem to suggest that the relative difficulty of the concepts tends to remain constant between the levels of learning.

(2) All the corresponding Year IV proportions outweigh those for Year II, three revealing a significant difference either at the $p < 0.01$ or the $p < 0.05$ level. The highest proportions reveal a difference significant at the $p < 0.01$ level and the lowest a difference at the $p < 0.05$ level. It may be concluded therefore that proportionally the Year IV students made a much larger number of errors on the items that were examined.

It is apparent that the four similar concepts represent basic syntactic features of Spanish, and their presence in the test materials of students at the lower level of learning corroborates this observation. The high error rates observed at the Year II level would seem to point to the nature of these syntactic features to be a source of much difficulty at the early learning stage. The higher rates yielded by the Year IV responses suggest the tendency of the concepts not only to persist but also to increase in difficulty at the more advanced level of learning. This latter tendency is indicative of the increasing complexity of the learning task which confronts the students as they progress from one grade level to the next. Thus,

added to the natural complexity of the language learning process referred to in Chapter I, the persistence of errors is envisaged as a factor complicating the task for the Year IV students. It is hoped that the linguistic analysis to be undertaken will lead to the identification of the source of these errors.

PART A (ii): QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DISSIMILAR
SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES

Hypothesis 2 predicts that no syntactical error types are present only among the Year II responses and only among the Year IV responses. The item types selected from the test material yielded different (dissimilar) error types between the years and, consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table IX shows that the dissimilar Year II error types relate to longer constructions and hay. (For a clarification of "longer constructions" see p. 151). The respective error rates are seen to be 0.51 and 0.23. The difference between the proportions (0.28) indicates that the syntactic difficulty involved in the use of longer constructions is much greater than that presented by hay. The high proportion recorded on the former concept indicates that the students' control of the language has not developed to the degree of mastery of the expressions involving longer constructions. The section dealing with the linguistic analysis of the syntactic errors should indicate whether the two tasks observed in the reference as requiring freer expression yielded fewer or more errors.

In Table X the dissimilar Year IV concepts and their

TABLE IX
PROPORTIONS OF DISSIMILAR SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED
BY ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR II

Concepts	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
1. Longer Constructions	A	53		
	B	30	Proportion of Errors from	
	C	31	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{43}{84} = 0.51$
	D	59		
			Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{16}{100} = 0.16$
	Total	173		
2. <u>Hay</u>	A	53		
	A	53	Proportion of Errors from	
	C	31	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{33}{145} = 0.23$
	D	59		
	D	59	Proportion of Unperformed	
	D	59	Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{5}{150} = 0.03$
	D	59		
	E	32		
	Total	405		

TABLE X

PROPORTIONS OF DISSIMILAR SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED
BY ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concepts	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
1. Prepositions - involving choice.	FA	27		
	FB	31		
	FB	31	Proportion of Errors from	
	FB	31	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{67}{87} = 0.77$
	FD	56		
	FD	56	Proportion of Unperformed	
	FE	22	Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{13}{100} = 0.13$
	FE	22		
	Total	276		
2. Object Pronouns	FAA	24		
	FAA	24		
	FAA	24		
	FB	31	Proportion of Errors from	
	FB	31	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{63}{83} = 0.75$
	FB	31		
	FC	21	Proportion of Unperformed	
	FD	56	Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{17}{100} = 0.17$
	FE	22		
	Total	264		
3. <u>Gustar</u>	FAA	24	Proportion of Errors from	
	FD	56	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{52}{83} = 0.63$
	FD	56		
	FE	22	Proportion of Unperformed	
			Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{17}{100} = 0.17$
	Total	158		
4. Time Clusters	FA	27		
	FAA	24	Proportion of Errors from	
	FB	31	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{54}{89} = 0.61$
	FB	31		
	FC	21	Proportion of Unperformed	

TABLE X (Continued)

PROPORTIONS OF DISSIMILAR SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED
BY ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concepts	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
			Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{11}{100} = 0.11$
Total			134	
5. Adjectives	FA	27		
	FA	27	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{29}{80} = 0.36$
	FD	56		
	FD	56	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{20}{100} = 0.20$
	FD	56		
	FE	22		
Total			244	

proportions are seen to be prepositions involving choice (0.77), object pronouns (0.75), gustar (0.63), time clusters (0.61) and adjectives (0.36). For a clarification of "time clusters" it may be noted that the related items were envisaged as testing the students' ability to use common structures involving the hour. Examples which may be cited are: Eran las ocho y veinticinco, a las diez y cuarto, a eso de las ocho y media.

The previous observation of the greater complexity of the learning task for the Year IV students would seem to be supported by the larger number of concepts yielded by their test material. Further evidence may be provided by the very high proportions of errors derived for all but one of the five dissimilar concepts, namely, the adjectives with a proportion of 0.36. The Year II proportions noted above (0.51 and 0.23) are remarkably lower than the majority of the Year IV proportions.

It is noteworthy that the proportion of errors made on items involving the choice of prepositions (0.77) parallels the error rate obtained for a previous class of prepositions -- the personal a. Here is additional evidence that the preposition system stands out as a particularly difficult aspect of the language for the Year IV students. The third class of prepositions seen earlier to yield a proportion of 0.61 is also considered as denoting a complex learning problem.

The object pronouns emerging with an error rate of 0.75 are represented as suggesting a level of complexity similar to that reflected by the higher proportion yielded by the prepositions. Considering the emphasis normally given to the object pronouns in

textbooks and by teachers, a result showing that the concept represents a complex learning task can hardly be unexpected. What perhaps is revealing is the high rate of error and, consequently, the high degree of complexity which still exists at the Year IV level. Again it is hoped that the linguistic analysis of the errors will identify the nature of the difficulty so that remedial procedures may be adequately planned.

Gustar and time clusters yielding the respective proportions of 0.63 and 0.61 may also be considered as being complex features of the language for the Year IV students. However, the complexity suggested is reduced from the degree noted in relation to the previous dissimilar concepts.

Finally the adjectives appear to be the least complex of the concepts, suggesting that the syntactic relationship between the adjective and the noun is more easily acquired than the foregoing Year IV dissimilar concepts.

As a conclusion to the discussion on the quantitative aspect of the syntactic errors, all the concepts for the two groups of students are ranked in order of difficulty in Table XI. In addition, the relative difficulty of the concepts is assessed from the standpoint of a criterion proportion of 0.25 accepted as indicating the presence of some learning problem requiring investigation and remediation. (See p. 80).

As observed in Table XI all the proportions excluding that derived for hay exceed the criterion level of difficulty. The inference is made from these results that the students in general are

TABLE XI

RANK ORDER OF ALL SYNTACTICAL CONCEPTS IN TERMS OF
DIFFICULTY FOR YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Year II		Year IV	
Concepts	Proportions	Concepts	Proportions
1. Personal <u>a</u>	0.61	1. Articles	0.83
2. Articles	0.60	2. (i) Personal <u>a</u>	0.77
3. Longer Constructions	0.51	(ii) Prepositions - involving choice	0.77
4. Prepositions Omitted or Inserted	0.49	3. Object Pronouns	0.75
5. <u>Ser</u> and <u>Estar</u>	0.42	4. <u>Gustar</u>	0.63
6. <u>Hay</u>	0.23	5. (i) Prepositions Omitted or Inserted	0.61
		(ii) Time Clusters	0.61
		6. <u>Ser</u> and <u>Estar</u>	0.58
		7. Adjectives	0.36

experiencing much difficulty in acquiring the syntax of the language. The evidence is strong that the features of the language tested by the item types denote problems which need to be overcome before mastery in these areas can be attained. The range of proportions observed in the table indicates, however, that some of the concepts are a greater source of difficulty than others for the particular group of students.

Examination of the Year IV proportions reveals that the articles, two groups of prepositions, namely, the personal a and prepositions involving choice, and the object pronouns present the greatest learning problem for the Year IV students. The immensity of the difficulty is reflected in each of the proportions which register a degree of difficulty three times or more as great as the criterion proportion.

Four of the remaining five Year IV proportions, being more than twice but less than three times as high as the 0.25 proportion, suggest that the respective concepts are very difficult and, consequently, also involve complexities which are inhibiting learning.

As indicated previously, only the tasks involving the positioning of adjectives are not reflected as presenting a highly complex learning problem for the Year IV students. It may be observed here in relation to, and in anticipation of the results in, morphology that the syntactic task is less complicated as it involves either the inversion or the lack of inversion of large classes of adjectives. In contrast, the selection in morphology of the appropriate adjective necessitates awareness of the number and gender of each noun; and, besides, it may be noted that the nouns are not always marked for gender. Yet

the syntactic proportion of 0.36 suggests that for a fair percentage of the Year IV students the concept is still a source of difficulty.

The tendency of the Year IV students to perform significantly worse than the Year II students, and the inference of the increasing complexity of the learning problem have already been noted. The sharp contrast between the performance of both groups is indicated by the fact that approximately fifty-six per cent of the Year IV proportions exceed the highest Year II proportion (0.61). This comparison permits the global observation of the relative degree of complexity which the syntactic features of the language denote for each group of students.

Three of the six Year II concepts are seen to register a proportion more than twice but less than three times as great as the criterion proportion of 0.25, with a fourth concept falling only slightly below this range. Therefore from the proportions recorded for four of the six concepts it may be inferred that the acquisition of syntax at the Year II level also, is a source of much difficulty. The fifth concept, ser and estar, yielding an error rate of 0.42 is not far removed from the level of difficulty noted above, and is therefore considered as involving complex learning problems. As noted previously, only one concept, hay, is represented by its proportion (0.23) as not being particularly difficult, but even so, the error rate is noteworthy, in that it falls only minimally below the criterion level of difficulty.

The general observation may be made that the level of mastery of each concept required by the criterion (0.75, the error rate being 0.25) has not been attained in the vast majority of cases. It is

particularly remarkable that inadequate knowledge of the concepts is reflected in high proportions of errors at the Year II level, suggesting that the complexity of the problems involved should not be overlooked. The importance of the linguistic analysis to identify the nature of the errors and the sources of the difficulty becomes apparent. The importance is underscored by the observation from the Year IV proportions that mastery becomes even more remote at the higher level of learning.

PART B: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SIMILAR MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES

The morphological error types designated as "similar" were observed to be related to five concepts. A reformulation of hypothesis 3 to include five sub-hypotheses was considered necessary for the statistical analysis of the relationship between the Year II and the Year IV proportions of errors on each of these similar concepts. The restated hypothesis is as follows:

There is no significant difference between the similar morphological error types deriving from the Year II and the Year IV responses related to (a) Adjectives (b) Possessive Adjectives (c) Present Indicative of Radical-Changing Verbs (d) Present Indicative of Regular Verbs and (e) Definite Articles.

In Table XII the proportions of the similar Year II and Year IV morphological error types and the levels of significance of the differences between the proportions are reported. The table reveals a difference at the $p < 0.01$ level between proportions yielded by the adjectives, requiring the rejection of the hypothesis 3(a). The

TABLE XII

TESTS OF SIGNIFICANCE BETWEEN PROPORTIONS OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR
TYPES RELATED TO SIMILAR CONCEPTS FOR YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Concepts	Proportions of Errors Year II	Proportions of Errors Year IV	Difference Between Proportions (z values)	Levels of Significance
1. Adjectives	0.24	0.60	5.81	$p < 0.01$
2. Possessive Adjectives	0.31	0.33	0.41	N.S.
3. Present Indicative of Radical-Changing Verbs	0.34	0.30	0.50	N.S.
4. Present Indicative of Regular Verbs	0.37	0.29	1.30	N.S.
5. Definite Articles	0.12	0.26	2.84	$p < 0.01$

proportions relating to the possessive adjectives, the present indicative of radical-changing verbs and the present indicative of regular verbs registered no significant differences and, consequently, hypotheses 3 (b), 3 (c) and 3 (d) were not rejected. A significant difference at the $p < 0.01$ level between the proportions pertaining to the definite articles was observed, resulting in the rejection of hypothesis 3 (e). Each of these five morphological concepts is considered in turn. As in the case of syntax discussions are based on the proportions of errors yielded by the tasks that were performed. Proportions computed on the samples may be observed in Appendix C.

As seen in Table XIII the error rates yielded by the item types related to the adjectives are 0.24 for Year II and 0.60 for Year IV. A comparison of all the Year IV proportions in Table XII reveals that the adjectives constitute maximal difficulty for the Year IV students. The wide difference between the groups in their performance on this concept is expressed by the significance level of $p < 0.01$.

The error rates as seen in Table XIV (0.31 for Year II and 0.33 for Year IV) indicate that the possessive adjectives present an equal degree of difficulty to the two groups of students. This observation is supported by the significance level (N.S.) registered by the proportions. In contrast to the class of adjectives noted above, the possessive adjectives appear to denote much less difficulty for the Year IV students, but more difficulty for the Year II students.

In Table XV the item types related to the present indicative of radical-changing verbs are seen to yield the error rates of 0.34 and 0.30 in favour of Year IV. The difference between the proportions

TABLE XIII

PROPORTIONS OF SIMILAR MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES RELATED
TO ADJECTIVES FOR YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Years	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
II	A	53		
	A	53		
	A	53	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{33}{138} = 0.24$
	A	53		
	B	30		
	B	30	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{12}{150} = 0.08$
	D	59		
	D	59		
	Total	390		
IV	FA	27		
	FA	27		
	FAA	24		
	FB	31		
	FB	31	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{64}{107} = 0.60$
	FC	21		
	FC	21		
	FD	56	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{43}{150} = 0.29$
	FD	56		
	FE	22		
	FE	22		
	FE	22		
		Total	360	

TABLE XIV

PROPORTIONS OF SIMILAR MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES RELATED
TO POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES FOR YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Years	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
II	A	53		
	B	30		
	C	31		
	D	59	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{43}{140} = 0.31$
	D	59		
	D	59	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{10}{150} = 0.07$
	D	59		
	Total	350		
IV	FAA	24		
	FB	31		
	FC	21		
	FD	56	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{28}{84} = 0.33$
	FD	56		
	FD	56	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{16}{100} = 0.16$
	FE	22		
	FE	22		

TABLE XV

PROPORTIONS OF SIMILAR MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES RELATED TO PRESENT
INDICATIVE OF RADICAL-CHANGING VERBS FOR YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Years	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
II	B	30		
	B	30	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{33}{97} = 0.34$
	B	30		
	B	30		
	C	31	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{3}{100} = 0.03$
	E	32		
	Total	183		
IV	FAA	24		
	FAA	24		
	FAA	24	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{25}{82} = 0.30$
	FAA	24		
	FAA	24		
	FE	22	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{18}{100} = 0.18$
	FE	22		
	FE	22		
	FE	22		

(0.04) is, however, not significant, and is, in effect, so minimal that the concept may be considered as offering the same degree of difficulty to the two groups.

Table XVI presents the proportions for another class of verbs, the present indicative of regular verbs yielding 0.37 and 0.29, again favouring the Year IV students. The difference between the years is not statistically significant, even though the proportions themselves reveal that in terms of the difficulty of the concept the groups are somewhat less comparable than on the preceding concept. It is noteworthy that the regular verbs appear to be the most difficult similar morphological concept for the Year II students. (See Table XII, p. 104).

As reported in Table XVII the error rates yielded by the definite articles are 0.12 for Year II and 0.26 for Year IV. These rates register a difference significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. This significance level suggests as wide a difference between the groups on this concept as the previously observed difference on the adjectives. A major observation, however, is the greater difficulty of the adjective, particularly for the Year IV students.

The following order of difficulty is suggested for the Year II students: first, the present indicative of regular verbs (0.37), second, the present indicative of radical-changing verbs (0.34), third, the possessive adjectives (0.31), fourth, adjectives (0.24), and fifth, the definite articles (0.12). For the Year IV students the order is seen to be as follows: first, adjectives (0.60), second, the possessive adjectives (0.33), third, the present indicative of radical-changing

TABLE XVI

PROPORTIONS OF SIMILAR MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES RELATED TO PRESENT
INDICATIVE OF REGULAR VERBS FOR YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Years	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
II	A	53		
	A	53		
	A	53		
	B	30		
	C	31	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{63}{195} = 0.37$
	C	31		
	C	31	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{5}{200} = 0.03$
	C	31		
	D	59		
	D	59		
	Total	462		
IV	FAA	24		
	FC	21		
	FC	21	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{19}{66} = 0.29$
	FC	21		
	FE	22	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{34}{100} = 0.34$
	FE	22		
	Total	109		

TABLE XVII

PROPORTIONS OF SIMILAR MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES RELATED TO DEFINITE
ARTICLES FOR YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Years	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
II	A	53		
	A	53		
	A	53		
	B	30	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{15}{124} = 0.12$
	B	30		
	D	59	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{26}{150} = 0.17$
	D	59		
	D	59		
	Total	396		
IV	FA	27		
	FA	27		
	FAA	24		
	FB	31	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks	$= \frac{31}{119} = 0.26$
	FB	31		
	FC	21		
	FC	21	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{31}{150} = 0.21$
	FD	56		
	FD	56		
	FE	22		
	FE	22		
	Total	338		

verbs and the present indicative of regular verbs (0.30 and 0.29, the difference being negligible) and fourth, the definite articles (0.26).

It is particularly noteworthy that none of the similar morphological concepts register a difference suggesting a decrease in the level of difficulty for the Year IV students. The level either increases as in the case of the definite articles and the adjectives, or remains more or less constant as in the case of the possessive adjectives, the radical-changing verbs and the regular verbs.

The definite article and the adjective share the characteristic of being dependent on the noun for the particular morphological form they take, and it is therefore interesting that on both of these concepts the Year IV students performed significantly worse. The lesser difficulty experienced by the Year II students may be due in part to the greater emphasis generally placed on the concepts during the early learning stages to enable students to acquire the fundamental Spanish concept of the relationship of the article and the adjective with the noun. During the later stages this emphasis is usually shifted to other aspects of the language resulting, presumably, in students exercising less care in identifying each noun with the appropriate article or adjective. Moreover, the volume of the linguistic material having increased considerably, the Year IV students are confronted with what may be considered the burdensome task of having to remember a great deal more, especially in situations where intensive practice is not the teaching mode. Since large numbers of Spanish nouns are not marked for gender, the increasing linguistic area in which the Year IV students operate will naturally yield a larger number of nouns

which must be individually identified.

Results on the definite articles and the adjectives for Year II and Year IV would seem to suggest that concepts acquired at a lower level of learning can be a source of difficulty at a higher level. This observation could imply that mastery of a particular linguistic feature at one level does not necessarily connote transfer of knowledge to another level. Hence the further implication of the need for ensuring that basic grammatical skills are maintained.

The other concepts, the possessive adjectives and the two classes of verbs, present a contrast with the definite articles and the adjectives, in that no significant difference is registered by the respective pairs of proportions. The lesser complexity for Year IV denoted by the possessive adjectives when compared with the adjective may be attributable to the fact that in the majority of instances in which the possessive adjective is used no identification of gender is required. The increased problem for the Year II students could result from the need for identifying the person, for example, nuestro as against su, and for inflecting the possessive adjective to accord with the thing or things possessed.

The absence of significant differences between the years in relation to the three concepts previously mentioned is an indication that it is possible for students at a higher grade not to advance on certain concepts beyond the level attained by students at a lower grade. This observation would seem to imply the need for vigilance on the teacher's part to identify areas of weakness and causes of

difficulties. Consistent and systematic analysis of the errors being made is suggested as a means of arriving at causes in order to effect appropriate remedies.

PART B (ii): QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DISSIMILAR
MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES

Hypothesis 4 predicted the occurrence of no dissimilar morphological error types in the responses of either the Year II or the Year IV students. Three concepts were found to be peculiar to the Year II group, and six to the Year IV group, necessitating the rejection of the null hypothesis.

The Year II concepts and their respective proportions as seen in Table XVIII are the present indicative of irregular verbs (0.36), the indefinite articles (0.31) and the present indicative of reflexive verbs (0.27).

Compared with the similar morphological concepts, the dissimilar concepts altogether indicate no increase in complexity of the morphological aspects of the language for the Year II students. Observation of the proportions pertaining to the irregular verbs (0.36) and the reflexive verbs (0.27) in conjunction with the proportions for the two verb classes previously noted, the radical-changing (0.34) and the regular (0.37) reveals that there is no substantial difference between the four groups of verbs in the present indicative tense. The items related to the reflexive verbs appear to constitute less difficulty than the items related to the other three concepts, but the difference is not remarkable. It may be inferred, therefore, that for

TABLE XVIII

PROPORTIONS OF DISSIMILAR MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED
BY ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR II

Concepts	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
1. Present Indicative of Irregular Verbs	A	53		
	A	53		
	A	53		
	B	30		
	B	30	Proportion of Errors from	
	C	31	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{58}{160} = 0.36$
	D	59		
	D	59	Proportion of Unperformed	
	D	59	Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{40}{200} = 0.20$
	D	59		
Total		545		
2. Indefinite Articles	A	53		
	A	53	Proportion of Errors from	
	D	59	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{28}{88} = 0.32$
	D	59		
	D	59	Proportion of Unperformed	
Total		283	Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{12}{100} = 0.12$
3. Present Indicative of Reflexive Verbs	B	30		
	C	31	Proportion of Errors from	
	D	59	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{27}{100} = 0.27$
			Proportion of Unperformed	
			Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{0}{100} = 0.00$
Total		120		

the Year II students the aspects of the present indicative tense denote, more or less, the same degree of complexity when viewed from the item types that were examined.

The difference between the students' performance on the definite articles (0.14) and the indefinite (0.31) is an interesting observation, since both concepts are determiners deriving their forms from the number and gender of the noun. Until the errors are actually analyzed in Part D, the reasons for the difficulty presented by the indefinite articles can hardly be determined.

The Year IV dissimilar morphological concepts and their proportions observed in Table XIX are the imperative (0.67), the preterite indicative tense (0.65), the present perfect and pluperfect tenses combined (0.61), time clusters (0.39), the imperfect indicative tense (0.28) and object pronouns (0.14).

The Year IV dissimilar concepts, in contrast to those for Year II, signify the increasing complexity of the morphological features of the language for students at the more advanced learning stage. Clearly this complexity is developing within the verbal system, as witness the proportions 0.67, 0.65 and 0.61. The contrast between the three verb classes and the present indicative tense observed earlier is particularly noteworthy. It is obvious that the Year IV students have attained a higher level of mastery of the present indicative tense. The reason for this may reside in the more intensive training in this aspect of the verb during the earlier years, and greater facility in learning at that stage when the language load is normally lighter.

TABLE XIX

PROPORTIONS OF DISSIMILAR MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED
BY ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concepts	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items		
1. Imperative	FAA	24		
	FAA	24		
	FB	31	Proportion of Errors from	
	FD	56	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{48}{72} = 0.67$
	FC	21		
	FE	22	Proportion of Unperformed	
	FE	22	Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{28}{100} = 0.28$
	Total	200		
2. Preterite Indicative	FA	27		
	FA	27		
	FA	27		
	FAA	24		
	FB	31	Proportion of Errors from	
	FB	31	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{120}{184} = 0.65$
	FB	31		
	FD	56	Proportion of Unperformed	
	FD	56	Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{16}{200} = 0.08$
	FD	56		
	FE	22		
	FE	22		
	FE	22		
	Total	454		
3. Present Perfect and Pluperfect	FAA	24		
	FD	56	Proportion of Errors from	
	FE	22	Performed Tasks	$= \frac{50}{82} = 0.61$
	FE	22		
	FE	22	Proportion of Unperformed	
	FE	22	Tasks in Sample	$= \frac{18}{100} = 0.18$

TABLE XIX (Continued)

PROPORTIONS OF DISSIMILAR MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED
BY ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concepts	Sub- groups	Possible No. of Items	
	FE	22	
	Total	190	
4. Time Clusters	FA	27	
	FAA	24	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks $= \frac{35}{89} = 0.39$
	FB	31	
	FB	31	
	FC	21	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample $= \frac{11}{100} = 0.11$
	Total	134	
5. Imperfect Indicative	FA	27	
	FA	27	
	FA	27	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks $= \frac{27}{97} = 0.28$
	FA	27	
	FB	31	
	FB	31	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample $= \frac{3}{100} = 0.03$
	FB	31	
	FB	31	
	FE	22	
	Total	254	
6. Object Pronouns	FAA	24	
	FB	31	Proportion of Errors from Performed Tasks $= \frac{10}{74} = 0.14$
	FB	31	
	FB	31	
	FC	21	Proportion of Unperformed Tasks in Sample $= \frac{26}{100} = 0.26$
	FE	22	
	Total	160	

Parenthetically, the retention of the same level of control over the years presents an interesting contrast with the situation involving the adjectives observed previously. The difference appears to consist in the individual nature of the nouns, particularly the unmarked ones, compared to the greater repetitiveness of the morphological aspects of the verb. Thus the quality of the early training together with the element of repetition and the longer span of years have worked to the advantage of the Year IV students in exercising greater control of the present indicative tense than of the three very difficult verb classes noted above.

The explanation, however, does not seem complete in view of the low proportion (0.28) yielded by the imperfect tense. Examination of the contrast between the preterite and imperfect indicative tenses may add another perspective. The regularity and relative simplicity of the forms of the imperfect tense compared with the forms of the preterite tense are well known, and it is evident that the greater complexity of the latter manifests itself in the high percentage of errors noted.

An observed feature of much foreign-language instruction appears to be related to the principle of working from the simple to the complex. The introduction of the preterite tense after the imperfect has been studied for some time is presumably encouraged by a number of textbooks. Carroll¹ observes that in a natural language

¹Carroll, in Handbook of Research on Teaching, p. 1073.

often the most irregular and exceptional forms are among the most common, implying that regularity and simplicity should not necessarily be the determinants of the sequence to be adopted in the instructional process.

A question which suggests itself is whether students, having first learned the imperfect, might not be lulled into thinking that the verb forms expressing the concept of the past in Spanish are characterized by the regularity and relative simplicity presented by the imperfect tense. An affirmation would suggest even greater complexity of the problem of acquiring the preterite. The question is a psychological one which falls outside the scope of this study, but it could be relevant to the observed difficulty involved in the acquisition of the preterite tense.

As a conclusion to this discussion on the two past indicative tenses, reference may be made to what seems to be a very important principle in second-language learning, that is, the regularity of linguistic forms facilitating the learning process. As observed in relation to the tenses certain aspects of the language are decidedly more regular than others.

Time clusters and object pronouns are of particular interest since they appear as both syntactic and morphological concepts. The greater difficulty experienced by the Year IV students on the items testing syntax may be observed from the respective syntactic and morphological proportions: 0.61 and 0.39 yielded by the time clusters and 0.75 and 0.14 yielded by the object pronouns. Clearly, the two concepts are not comparable in terms of difficulty in either of the

grammatical areas, but together they indicate that the syntactic structures involved present greater learning problems than the morphological structures.

The remarkable difference between the levels of difficulty registered by syntax and morphology may be explained, in part, by the fact that Spanish is generally inflected for number and gender, resulting in greater frequency of the morphological patterns in the linguistic activity of the students. It may be observed, in contrast, that the syntactic structures appear less frequently.

The observation of the more frequent patterns being more easily learned than the less frequent ones accords with the previous discussion on the preterite and imperfect indicative tenses, and would seem to support the suggestion that repetition could be a productive teaching device.

The discussion on the quantitative aspect of the morphological error types is concluded with a ranking of all the year II and Year IV concepts in Table XX, and with the assessment of the difficulty of the concepts from the basis of the 0.25 criterion level of difficulty.

Close observation of Table XX reveals three natural divisions among the Year IV concepts. The first group is comprised of four concepts denoting a level of difficulty more than twice but less than three times as high as the criterion proportion. The indications are that it is in these areas that the Year IV students are experiencing the greatest difficulty in acquiring the morphological features of the language. The proportions further suggest that the majority of the students are being left behind, a situation which

TABLE XX

RANK ORDER OF ALL MORPHOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN TERMS OF DIFFICULTY
FOR YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Year II		Year IV	
Concepts	Proportions	Concepts	Proportions
1. Present Indicative of Regular Verbs	0.37	1. Imperative	0.67
2. Present Indicative of Irregular Verbs	0.36	2. Preterite Indicative	0.65
3. Present Indicative of Radical-Changing Verbs	0.34	3. Present Perfect and Pluperfect	0.61
4. Indefinite Articles	0.32	4. Adjectives	0.60
5. Possessive Adjectives	0.31	5. Time Clusters	0.39
6. Present Indicative of Reflexive Verbs	0.27	6. Possessive Adjectives	0.33
7. Adjectives	0.24	7. Present Indicative of Radical-Changing Verbs	0.30
8. Definite Articles	0.12	8. Present Indicative of Regular Verbs	0.29
		9. Imperfect Indicative	0.28
		10. Definite Articles	0.26
		11. Object Pronouns	0.14

contravenes the expectation of mastery by the greatest possible number of students.

The next group of proportions range from 0.26 to 0.39, each of the concepts involved exceeding the criterion level but being less than twice as great. The majority of the concepts fall in this group; and although in terms of the items constituting the respective samples the greater percentage of students have apparently mastered the concepts, there still remains a fair proportion for whom remedial work appears to be necessary.

According to the criterion score, the object pronouns, comprising the final group, appear as the only Year IV concept which presents no difficulty for a very high percentage (86%) of the students.

It is interesting that approximately forty-five per cent of the Year IV proportions exceed the highest Year II error rate. From this observation the relative difficulty experienced generally by each group in the process of acquiring morphology may be discerned. Reference has already been made to the areas of highest difficulty for the Year IV students. The linguistic analysis of the errors is expected to pinpoint the specific problems.

In contrast to the Year IV error rates none of the Year II rates suggest that the majority of the Year II students are experiencing difficulty with a particular concept. The greater problems would thus seem to develop beyond the Year II stage.

Six of the eight Year II proportions exceed the criterion level but register a level less than twice as great. As in the case of the Year IV students this range of proportions suggests the need for

remediation for a fair percentage of the students.

The adjectives and the definite articles are represented as presenting no difficulty for a high percentage of the students, but the adjectives are noteworthy since the proportion (0.24) falls only minimally below the criterion level of difficulty.

A brief comparison of the students' performance in syntax and morphology is suggested as an appropriate conclusion to Parts A and B. As seen in Table XXI the syntactic and morphological concepts for Year II are ranked in order of difficulty. A pertinent observation is that five of the six syntactic concepts, that is, approximately eighty-three per cent exceed in difficulty the morphological concept appearing as the most difficult. Therefore, already at the Year II level there is the tendency for syntax in general to constitute the greater hurdle.

As witnessed by two groups of Year IV proportions ranked in Table XXII, this pattern tends to persist. The morphological concept recorded as the most difficult is surpassed in difficulty by approximately forty-four per cent of the syntactic concepts. This percentage, compared with that noted above, reveals a narrowing of the gap between syntax and morphology despite the remarkably high syntactic proportions. It seems to follow that at the Year IV level the degree of complexity denoted by morphology is tending toward the degree expressed by syntax. This appears to be a particularly serious situation suggesting that increasingly students are assimilating less of the grammar during the more advanced stage of learning. Consequently, as noted earlier, mastery of the grammatical structures

TABLE XXI

RANK ORDER OF SYNTACTICAL CONCEPTS AND MORPHOLOGICAL CONCEPTS
IN TERMS OF DIFFICULTY FOR YEAR II

Syntax		Morphology	
Concepts	Proportions	Concepts	Proportions
1. Personal <u>a</u>	0.61	1. Present Indicative of Regular Verbs	0.37
2. Articles	0.60	2. Present Indicative of Irregular Verbs	0.36
3. Longer Constructions	0.51	3. Present Indicative of Radical Changing Verbs	0.34
4. Prepositions Omitted or Inserted	0.49	4. Indefinite Articles	0.32
5. <u>Ser</u> and <u>Estar</u>	0.42	5. Possessive Adjectives	0.31
6. <u>Hay</u>	0.23	6. Present Indicative of Reflexive Verbs	0.27
		7. Adjectives	0.24
		8. Definite Articles	0.12

TABLE XXII

RANK ORDER OF SYNTACTICAL CONCEPTS AND MORPHOLOGICAL CONCEPTS
IN TERMS OF DIFFICULTY FOR YEAR IV

Syntax		Morphology	
Concepts	Proportions	Concepts	Proportions
1. Articles	0.83	1. Imperative	0.67
2. (i) Personal <u>a</u>	0.77	2. Preterite Indicative	0.65
(ii) Prepositions - involving choice	0.77	3. Present Perfect and Pluperfect	0.61
3. Object Pronouns	0.75	4. Adjectives	0.60
4. <u>Gustar</u>	0.63	5. Time Clusters	0.39
5. (i) Prepositions Omitted or Inserted	0.61	6. Possessive Adjectives	0.33
(ii) Time Clusters	0.61	7. Present Indicative of Radical-Changing Verbs	0.30
6. <u>Ser</u> and <u>Estar</u>	0.58	8. Present Indicative of Regular Verbs	0.29
7. Adjectives	0.36	9. Imperfect Indicative	0.28
		10. Definite Articles	0.26
		11. Object Pronouns	0.14

tends to become less attainable.

The results of the data analyzed in these two parts, A and B, strongly suggest the need for remediation at all levels of the language learning process. Knowledge of the nature and the source of errors is envisaged as a valuable determinant of an effective remedial program, hence the linguistic analysis to be undertaken in Parts C and D.

PART C: LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE FREQUENT SYNTACTIC ERROR TYPES

Both theory and research have pointed to inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic interference as a two-fold linguistic problem making the acquisition of a foreign language a particularly complex phenomenon. Part C of this study is devoted to the testing of the assumption that the syntactic errors made by students in Spanish result from interference from English and Jamaican Creole (inter-linguistic interference) and from the Spanish system itself (intra-linguistic interference). Hypotheses 5 and 6 bear on this aspect of the study.

In this section the frequent syntactical error types are classified for analysis. As noted in Chapter 3 errors are classified according to the kinds of problems they are seen to reflect. It is important to note that classes of errors did not emerge as mutually exclusive in all cases. In each of the tables in this section double asterisks (**) preceding an error indicate that the same error appears previously in one or more classes. The overlapping of errors seems to be yet another indicator of the complexity of a language system.

There is another point to this complexity. Although great care was exercised to keep the syntactic and the morphological categories of errors apart, the inter-relationship between syntax and morphology rendered it difficult in some cases to make clear-cut distinctions. A case in point concerns the syntactic concept Gustar. One class of errors appearing to be overtly morphological in that it involves subject-verb agreement is perceived as reflecting, though less overtly, syntactic structural difficulty. The errors are therefore regarded as syntactic although the possibility of their being purely morphological is accommodated.

In the tables the class designated as "miscellaneous" groups the errors too few in number to constitute a separate class.

A further preliminary comment relates to the possibility of translation tasks inducing awareness of the structures of English, a situation which could vitiate the assessment of native-language influence. The assignment of such tasks is however assumed to derive from a kind of cognitive teaching approach directed toward the awareness of similarities or differences between English and Spanish. In this event the important question becomes whether the relationships have been perceived.

For the analysis of the syntactic error types the concepts are presented in the following sequence:

1. Articles: Year II and Year IV.
2. Personal a: Year II and Year IV.
3. Prepositions omitted or inserted: Year II and Year IV.
4. Prepositions involving choice: Year IV.

5. Ser and Estar: Year II and Year IV.
6. Longer constructions: Year II.
7. Object pronouns: Year IV.
8. Gustar: Year IV.
9. Time clusters: Year IV.
10. Adjectives: Year IV.

In each table the relevant tasks precede the classification of the errors.

1. Articles: Year II and Year IV

In Tables XXIII and XXIV respectively, the Year II and the Year IV error types involving the articles are presented. The error rate of 0.61 was previously viewed as indicating that the concept offers a high degree of difficulty for the Year II students. The proportion of 0.83 is outstandingly high, suggesting that acquisition of the article is an immensely difficult undertaking for the Year IV students.

Tables XXIII and XXIV reveal high incidence of omissions of the definite article preceding (i) the names of persons spoken about and (ii) generalized nominals. Spanish makes obligatory the form El señor Tomás which conflicts with English and Creole zero forms Mr Thomas and Missa Tamas.² Similarly no me gustan los zapatos rojos

²The orthography used for the Creole structures is adopted from A Dictionary of Jamaican English, edited by Frederic G. Cassidy and Robert B. LePage, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

TABLE XXIII

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY
ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR II

Concept: Articles	
<u>Tasks:</u> ⁺	
(Completion)	
1. _____ es la directora de mi escuela.	
(Reading Comprehension)	
2. ¿Quién está preocupada?	
(Translation)	
3. They are giving the party on Wednesday.	
(Conversation-type)	
4. ¿Dónde aprende usted el español?	
5. ¿Qué es el señor . . . ? ⁺⁺	
<u>Classification of Errors:</u>	
<u>Omission</u> -----	34
señora . . . es la directora (9)	
tienen una fiesta miércoles	
en miércoles (4)	
a miércoles	
aprendo español (19)	
<u>Insertion</u> -----	6
el señor . . . es uno profesor	
un profesor (5)	
<u>Miscellaneous</u> -----	3
tienen una fiesta esta miercoles	
en el miercoles	
el señor es del profesor	

⁺ The examination questions from which the items for Year II are extracted may be observed in Appendix D.

⁺⁺ Names of teachers are omitted.

TABLE XXIV

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY
ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Articles

Tasks:⁺

(Translation)

1. Mr. García . . . used to leave
2. She likes flowers
3. and animals
4. . . . the doors and windows
5. Robert wishes to be a merchant
6. I do not like red wine
7. I do not like red shoes
8. . . . playing cricket
9. and football

Classification of Errors:

Omission ----- 72

Señor García (9)
 ella gustan flores (3)
 y animales (3)
 no me gusta vino tinto (6)
 no me gusta vino rojo (6)
 yo gusto no vino ron
 no me gustan rojos zapatos (5)
 no me gusta rojo zapatos (4)
 a mí no me gustan zapatos rojos
 no gustan zapatos de rojo
 jugaba cricket (13) y futbol (11)
 jugar futbol
 la puertas y ventanas (8)

Insertion ----- 3

Roberto deso una (3)

⁺ The examination questions from which the items for Year IV are extracted may be observed in Appendix E.

is incongruent with I do not like red shoes and mi no laik red shuuz. The Spanish expressions jugaba al cricket y al fútbol and aprendo el español require the use of the article, whereas the equivalent expressions in English and Creole do not. In accordance with this observed pattern whereby differences between the languages seem to signify difficulties for the learners are (i) the Year II responses in which the article is omitted:

*tienen una fiesta miércoles
 en miércoles

and (ii) the Year II and the Year IV responses in which the indefinite article has been erroneously inserted:

*Roberto deso una --³
*el señor . . . es un profesor

The difficulty experienced by the students in the use of the definite and the indefinite articles appears to originate primarily in the absence of the particular functions in English and Creole.

Emerging too as a problem for the Year IV students is the noun construction compounded with and in which English permits the use of a single article as in the doors and windows, but where Spanish generally requires the repetition of the modifier: las puertas y las ventanas. The existence of the Spanish correspondence in a large number of Creole instances, for example, di duor an di winda dem does not seem to inhibit the effect of English on the Spanish structure.

The problems encountered by the students in the acquisition of the article are not attributed only to inter-language interference. Spanish omits the article before the name of a person who is directly

³The reader is advised to refer to the related task.

addressed as in ¡Buenos días, señor García. It is possible that the learners identify this structure with that of their own languages. Hence intra-linguistic influence is also perceived as a possible reinforcing element operating against the acquisition of the function of el in indirect reference to a person.

2. Personal "a": Year II and Year IV

Tables XXV and XXVI present the Year II and the Year IV error types related to the personal a. The proportion of errors for Year II (0.61) is considered as suggesting that these students experience a high level of difficulty with the concept, while the Year IV proportion (0.77) is seen to reflect immense difficulty for the Year IV students.

The structure involving the use of the personal a stands out clearly as a point of contrast with English and Creole. The learner is oriented to such expressions as I have to see the doctor and wi no si Luola muma (we haven't seen Lola's mother). Spanish uses the personal a in a sentence to indicate that the object which follows is either a definite person, one of the indefinite pronouns, alguien, nadie, alguno, ninguno, or a personalized thing. Hence the Spanish structure tengo que visitar al médico and hemos visto a la madre de Lola contrasting with the English and Creole forms noted above.

But Spanish permits the omission of the preposition in a number of instances including when a person is the object of the sentence. The following examples are noted by Stockwell, et al:

Perdió su hijo
Quiere un chofer
Tengo un hermano (pp. 186-187)

TABLE XXV

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY
ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR II

Concept: Personal a

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. No vemos _____ de Lola (the mother)
(Reading Comprehension)
2. ¿La señora va a buscar al señor López?
3. ¿Qué pasa cuando la señora de López va a llamar a la policía?

Classification of Errors:

Omission ----- 54

No vemos la madre de Lola (51)
la señora va a buscar el señor López (3)

Miscellaneous ----- 3

al señor Lopez no va llegar en casa
a la policia oye el telefono

Errors not calculated

la señora va a llamar

TABLE XXVI
CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED
BY ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Personal a

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. he has to see the doctor
2. he passed a man
3. (he) could not help asking the man
4. Do not touch the sick boy
5. Tell (usted) Peter that

Classification of Errors:

Omission ----- 67

este ver el medico
ha visto el doctor (4)
va el doctor
ver el doctor
tiene ver el doctor
ha veido el medico
pasó un hombre (9)
paseó un hombre (5)
veia un hombre (2)
pasió un hombre (3)
passó un hombre
preguntar el hombre (2)
preguntando el hombre (2)

preguntó el hombre (3)
pedir el hombre
No toque usted el muchacho (2)
No toca usted el muchacho (12)
No tocar usted el muchacho (3)
No toce usted el muchacho (5)
No toco usted el muchacho
Diga Pedro (2)
Cuenta Pedro
Nare Pedro
Lo Pedro que
Díga Vd. Pete

Miscellaneous ----- 1

preguntar del hombre

The first two instances also accommodate a to effect a change of meaning. There is, moreover, the very general structure in which a is omitted from sentences where the object is a thing, an example being hemos visto el bolso de Lola. The element of contrast between Spanish and the students' languages has been acknowledged above. In addition, it seems feasible to impute a part of the learning problem to the likely psychological set developed by the students from equating the English and Creole pattern with the very general Spanish form without the relater a. The difficulty thus appears to be both external and internal, that is, inter-lingual and intra-lingual.

3. Prepositions omitted or inserted: Year II and Year IV

Tables XXVII and XXVIII contain, respectively, the Year II and Year IV error types yielded by item types pertaining to the omission or insertion of prepositions. From the standpoint of the 0.25 criterion level of difficulty the respective proportions of 0.49 and 0.61 were regarded earlier as indicating that this class of prepositions denote a high level of difficulty for both years.

Table XXVII shows that a large number of the Year II errors involve the omission of the preposition. Typical errors are

*¿Quién es el libro
 *Es Marta's
 *Son las tres tarde

Omitted from the first two responses is the preposition de which is employed to express possession with a noun as in ¿De quién es el libro? These incorrect structures show a definite relation to the English patterns: Whose is the book? It's Martha's, and reflect the tendency

TABLE XXVII

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR II

Concept: Prepositions Omitted or Inserted

Tasks:

(Conversation-type)

1. ¿De qué es la puerta?
(Translation)
2. Son las _____ (3 p.m.)
3. Whose is the book?
4. It is Martha's.
5. We began to eat the grapes.
6. They are going to eat now.
7. They are giving the party on Wednesday.

Classification of Errors:

Omission ----- 31

¿Quién es el libro? (9)	es le Martha's
¿Quien el libro es?	La es Marta
¿Es el libro?	Lo Marta
Que es el libro (2)	Son las tres y tardes
Quien el libro	tarde (2)
es Marta's (5)	manyana
es Marta (3)	Nosotros empezamos comer
es la Martha's	

Insertion ----- 5

la fiesta al miércóles
en miércoles (2)
a miércoles
en el miércoles

Errors not calculated

a quién el libro (4)	En la clase es uno puerta
la puerta es amarilla	La puerta de yo clase enfrente del despacho

TABLE XXVIII

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Prepositions Omitted or Inserted

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. the following day, he
2. he used to leave the house
3. Listen to the story
4. They are going to ask us for money
5. I will like to travel
6. The cows . . . are looking for water

Classification of Errors:

Omission ----- 16

el día proxima	el día siguiente (4)
el día proximo (3)	salío la casa
el siguiente día	salía la casa (6)

Insertion ----- 35

escuchen ustedes al cuento (2)	estará iendo por moneda
escucha al cuento	van a preguntar nos para dinero
escucho a la cuento	yo gustara a viajar
escuche a el cuento (2)	yo gustaré a viajar (2)
viendan pedir os a moneda	me gustaré a viajan
van a nos pedir para el dinero	Yo ha gusto a voy
iré a pregunta por dinero	me gustare a ir
son yendo para dinero	Yo he gustaré a viaja
van a preguntarnos por la dinero	Me gustaré a viajar (2)
han preguntían para moneda	Me gustara a viajar
van a preguntar nos de dinero	buscan para agua
yendo a contestar para dinero	estamos pagmos por agua
van pedir nosotros para comeda	miran para agua
tiene pregunta para dinero	miran por agua (3)
van iendo preguntamos para dinero	

Errors not calculated

en el día siguiente	salía a la casa
saldría a su casa	salío a la casa

of the students to find one-to-one correspondences between Spanish and English. Accordingly, p.m. is associated directly with tarde. The same observation of inter-language difference and interference applies to the Year IV responses omitting the preposition a in the form al día siguiente and de in salía de la casa. The more general English structure from which is deleted the optional on as in (on) the following day seems to contribute to the persistence of the error in Spanish.

The Creole structures im lef di hous (he leaves, or left, the house) and (pan) di nedda die [(on) the following day] correspond to the English forms and consequently may also help to generate the Spanish error. Seemingly non-influential, however, are the Creole patterns related respectively to the first two Year II errors noted above. A fi-uu buk? (Whose book is it?) is distinct from both English and Spanish in that the verb a (is) initiates the possessive in this interrogative construction. A fi Maata (It's Martha's) syntactically equates es de Marta in all respects.

Table XXVIII reveals a high frequency of error related to the insertion of the preposition. Parenthetically, while the focus is on the preposition, the wider structures in which the errors appear are, for the most part, recorded since they reflect other important problems which may not appear elsewhere in the study. A large number of the errors was recorded from sentences involving the use of the transitive verbs pedir, buscar and escuchar which, unlike the corresponding forms in English and Creole, forbid the co-occurrence of the equivalents of for and to. There is clear evidence of a contrastive

difficulty.

Similarly errors of the type *me gustaré a viajar with the preposition used as part of the verb complement are common and reveal a correspondence with English and Creole patterns, the one employing the preposition to and the other fi. However, the difficulty cannot be explained only contrastively: the apparent "inconsistency" of Spanish in allowing the relater in one expression as in empezamos a comer could contribute further to the retention of the form which is already familiar to the students. The single error (Table XXVII) recorded on the item requiring the use of a would seem to support this observation.

4. Prepositions involving choice: Year IV

Table XXIX presents the Year IV error types involving the choice of prepositions. The very high error rate of 0.77 derived from the item types examined is viewed as suggesting that the use of the appropriate preposition is extremely difficult to acquire.

Typical errors observed in the data are:

*en el tercer día
 *a la esquina
 *¿Qué piensa de
 *consistio de
 *salió por

Each of the prepositions en, a, de used evidently to express, respectively, on, at, of (or about in the case of pensar) is not relevant to the particular environment in which it is used. With respect to the first three errors the possibility of Creole influence is not altogether remote since the forms (pan) di tud die [(on) the third day], a di kaana (at the corner) and we yaa tingk bout (what

TABLE XXIX

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Prepositions --- involving choice

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. On the third day
2. The bus at the corner
3. his sister was leaving for the office
4. breakfast which consisted of
5. What were the boys thinking of?
6. Are you thinking about
7. This boy thinks about his
8. He was thinking about his

Classification of Errors:Wrong choice ----- 53

en el tercer día (7)	Son Vd. pienso de
a la esquina (5)	Vd. pensando a
al rincon (3)	pensando de (2)
a la plaza	creido de
consistio de (5)	en piensa de
¿Que piensa de	salió por (2)
¿Que los muchachos pensaron de	estaba por
¿Que pensieron de los muchachos (2)	salía para de
¿Que los hijos creían de	era llegaba por (2)
¿Pensado de (3)	salía de
¿Estás creyendo de	había saliendo por
Piensa de (7)	estaba saliendo por
¿Pensáis ustedes de	

Omission ----- 13

el tercer día (2)
 consistio el cafe (2)
 consitio cafe (3)
 ¿Que ellos piensan (2)
 ¿Que pensaban los muchachos (2)
 Está pensando nuestras
 salia ir

Word Order ----- 6

¿Qué estuvieron pensando en
 **¿Que piensa de

TABLE XXIX (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

**¿Que los muchachos pensaron de
**¿Que pensieron de los muchachos (2)
**¿Que los hijos creían de

are you thinking about) can be seen to parallel those of English. The occurrence of de with consistió appears to be directly related to English. The existence in Creole of the cognate of consist is not known to the writer nor to other native speakers consulted. Moreover, in Creole an entirely different structure is employed to express consistió en.

The English and the Creole forms to think on and tingk pan being less frequently used than those forms with the prepositions of, about, bout seem, for that reason, to be non-facilitative in the acquisition of the appropriate Spanish structure. Besides the difference between pensar en and pensar de is not so clearly marked in the students' own languages, hence the difficulty of making the necessary semantic distinction between the Spanish structures. The problem appears to be strongly inter-linguistic. Yet, the fact that there is also pensar de which corresponds to the forms in English and Creole is perceived as contributing to a fixed association between the languages and, therefore, intra-lingually to the complexity of the problem.

The correct choice of por and para represents for the English and Creole speaker an inter-linguistic difficulty in that Spanish demands a discriminatory ability not required by English and Creole.

Examination of the errors recorded in the use of the three classes of prepositions, the personal a, prepositions omitted or inserted and prepositions involving choice, points to the exertion of both inter-lingual and intra-lingual pressures on the learners. Inter-lingual influence appears to operate in the greater majority of

cases. The characteristic extensiveness of the distribution of the Spanish prepositions seems to set up conflicts with the English and Creole systems, thus creating much difficulty for the learners. The data concerning inappropriate choices reveal the inclination of students toward setting up equations between Spanish and English in particular, and remaining within the relationships established. The wide range of problems which reflect "first-language" patterns may be interpreted as a tendency of the learners to simplify the learning problem. The apparent inconsistency of Spanish in demanding two structures perceived by the learner as identical creates intra-lingual difficulties.

5. "Ser" and "Estar": Year II and Year IV

Tables XXX and XXXI show the errors recorded in the use of Ser and Estar. The item types extracted from the Year II and the Year IV test materials are perceived of as testing the students' ability not only to distinguish between these two verbs but, as indicated by Task no. 4 in Table XXX and nos. 1 and 3 in Table XXXI, to distinguish each of the two verbs from other verbs. The respective Year II and Year IV proportions yielded by the concept of Ser and Estar are 0.42 and 0.58. The deduction made from these proportions is that the concept poses much difficulty for both years, but that the difference at the $p < 0.05$ level of significance between the proportions signifies greater difficulty for Year IV.

A large number of errors seen in Tables XXX and XXXI reveal the strong tendency of the learners to resort to the forms of ser.

TABLE XXX

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR II

Concept: Ser and Estar

Tasks:

(Conversational Type)

1. ¿Dónde está la pizarra?
2. ¿Quién está detrás de Vd.?
3. ¿De dónde eres tu?

(Translation)

4. Hoy _____ (It is sunny)
(Reading Comprehension)
5. ¿Dónde está el despacho del doctor?
6. ¿Dónde está la casita de Conchita?

Classification of Errors:

Wrong use of Ser ----- 22

la pizarra es delante
 es en la clase (2)
 es en la pared (2)
 es sobre la pared
una muchacha es detrás de mí
un libro es detras de
detrás es una muchacha

el despacho es a la izquierda
la casita es a la (2)
Conchita es vivi en la casita
Hoy es calor
 es sol (7)
 es la tempo y hace

Omission of Verb ----- 7

La pizarra delante de la clase
 en la clase
Yo detras de

la casita a la izquierda
el despacho en el pueblo (3)

Omission of accent ----- 6

la pizarra esta una
 esta en (3)

la silla esta detras
Carol esta detrás

Miscellaneous ----- 3

**la pizarra esta una
Del doctor está en el medico
Del Conchita esta en la cocina

Errors not calculated

la pizarra es de madera
Hoy hace sol tiempo
 hace soy
 hay frico

 tiempo hace
El señor Mendoza es médico
Conchita la criada

TABLE XXXI

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IVConcept: Ser and EstarTasks:

(Translation)

1. a man . . . who was accompanied by
2. his black ones are at the cobbler's
3. It was cold in the room.
4. The pupils are near the picture
5. My friends are tired
6. The wheels . . . are big
7. The shops will be full of
8. The questions are not difficult
9. The coffee is too hot

Classification of Errors:Wrong use of "Ser" ----- 22

era acompañado a
 fué acompañaba de
 sería acompañado por
 los negros son a la cobbler
 son al zapatero (3)
 son en la zapatera
 la pieza era muy frio (2)
 es estaba frio en el cuarto

era frío en la pieza
 era fresco en la pieza
 fue muy fria en la pieza
 era frio en la cuarto
 los alumnos son cerca de
 mis amigos son cansado (2)
 las tiendas fueron llena de
 el café es muy calor (3)

Wrong use of Estar ----- 15

el cuarto esta frio
 la cuarto esta hace frio
 está frio en la pieza (2)
 estaba muy frio en (2)
 **es estaba frio en el
 la pieza esta muy frio

las ruedas estan muy grande
 están muy largas
 estan muy largo
 las questions no está difficil
 no estan dificil
 las preguntas estan no dificil
 la cuestiones no esta dificil

Omission of accents ----- 11

los negros estan (2)
 **la cuarto esta hace frio
 **la pieza esta muy frio
 **el cuarto esta frio

las tiendas estaran lleno (2)
 **las preguntas estan no deficil
 **las cuestiones no esta muy
 dificil
 **las ruedas estan muy (2)

TABLE XXXI (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Miscellaneous ----- 5

los alumnos cerca de el cuadro
los alumnos esos
las tiendas llenarán gente
las tiendas hay tienen mucho
el cafe tiene más calor

Errors not calculated

acompañó por un perro
acompañaba por un perro (2)
lo frio en la pieza

The need for estar to express an unstable condition, as well as location which does not connote an event, was not perceived by many of the learners. Examples of errors generated as a consequence are:

*mis amigos son cansado
 *el café es muy calor
 *los negros son al zapatero
 *la pizarra es en la clase

English employs the single verb to be and Creole either the zero form as in mi fren dem taiyad [my friends (are) tired] , di kaafi hat [the coffee (is) hot] or the optional de as in di blak-buod (de) iina di klaas [the blackboard (is) in the classroom] . But Spanish distinguishes between contextual situations by the use of more than one verb. The problem reflected by the errors noted above is therefore considered to be inter-lingual.

It is a conjecture on the part of the writer that inter-language interference is reinforced by the formal resemblance of is and es, which could be a factor contributing to the more common use of ser.

The observed confusion between ser and estar is also reflected in the erroneous use of estar. Examples are:

*las ruedas estan muy grande
 *las questiones no está difficil

Stockwell, et al point to the function of ser as placing its subject within a particular class and that of estar as commenting on its subject. Many of the errors made suggest that this distinction is not "felt" by the students.

The problem is not confined to the confusion between ser and estar. The following examples suggest that the learners are not only

forming correspondences between the languages, but may also be analogizing erroneously within the target language itself:

*es sol
 *la pieza era frio
 *la pieza esta frio
 *era acompañado de

The structure *la pieza esta frio is probably perceived as expressing the same subject-predicate relationship as that being expressed by el café está frío. In such a case the problem would be identified as intra-lingual.

The failure to use the verb hacer in the first two instances and ir in the last reveals that the syntactic difficulty of employing ser and estar goes beyond the problem of distinguishing between them. The use of hacer and ir requires of the learners a perception alien to English and Creole. For example, the formal resemblance between The room is cold, The baby is cold and It is cold does not induce the learner to see any differences between the forms. The Spanish equivalents call for a new kind of orientation. The stubbornness of the problem of acquiring hacer in the environments noted above may be inferred from the persistence of the difficulty from the Year II grade to the Year IV grade.

Omission of the accent mark from the forms of estar may derive from the general absence of the written accent in English as well as intra-lingually from the demonstrative adjective esta.

6. Longer Constructions: Year II

In Table XXXII the Year II error types pertaining to longer

TABLE XXXII

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Longer Constructions

Tasks:

(Conversation-type)

1. ¿Dónde vive Vd? (2)
2. ¿Cuántos años hace que asistes a la escuela de . . .? ⁺
3. ¿Qué fecha es hoy?

Classification of Errors:Word Order ----- 18

Vivo en la caye número 36 R . . . Drive ⁺⁺
 en la calle V . . . Rd. numero deci seis (2)
 en la cia número veinte M . . .
 trienta y cinco E . . . H . . . Rd.
 en cinco G . . . avenida
 un contesta in nueve P . . . avenda
 en una media G . . . avendia
 ocho K . . . avenue
 en 17 S . . . Avenue
 número nueve D . . . Ave.
 17 D . . . Drive
 nueve V . . . lane
 en el numero catorce P . . . calle
 en la calle, número cuatro, C . . .
 G . . . H . . . número biente siete
 Yo asisto hace dos años a la escuela de
 Hoy es miercoles es de marzo el trienta y uno

Prepositions - wrong use or omission ----- 12

**Vivo trienta y cinco E . . . H . . . Rd.
 en a Jamaica
 la calle R . . .
 **G . . . H . . . numero
 **ocho K . . . avenue
 **número nueve D . . . Ave.
 **nueve V . . . lane
 Vive 17 D . . . Drive
 La aveneda D . . . C . . .
 Hace dos años asistes a la escuela
 Hoy es miercoles es 31 de Marzo es 1971
 La fecha es hoy trenta y una de Marzo

TABLE XXXII (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Articles - wrong use or omission ----- 9

Vivo en la D . . . Road	Hoy es 31 de marzo (4)
en calle E . . .	**La fecha es hoy treinta y una
**en el numero catorce	de marzo de noventa
**Hoy es miercoles es 31 de Marzo	

Omission of other parts of construction ----- 9

**Vivo G . . . H . . . numero biente siete
 **ocho K . . . avenue
 **nueve V . . . lane
**Vive 17 D . . . Drive
Dos anos que asistes a la escuela de . . .
Hace dos años que asistes de . . .
Hace dos años a la escuela de . . .
Hoy es de Marzo
**La fecha es hoy treinta y una de marzo de noventa

Miscellaneous ----- 5

Hace dos años que asisto a esta la escuela (2)
Qué hace a la escuela de . . . son las dos años

Errors not calculated

Hace dos años que asistes a la escuela de . . . (5)
Me vive en la casa

+ Names of schools are withheld.
++ Addresses of students are not given in full.

constructions are shown. A clarification of the concept is considered to be a necessary preliminary to the linguistic analysis of the errors. The question underlying the selection of the tasks seen in the table was how well are Year II students able to produce, in writing, structures somewhat longer than those produced in response to questions such as ¿Cómo te llamas? ¿Cuántas habitaciones tiene tu casa? An additional query related to tasks 1 and 3 was how much control do these students have over a longer structure when the greater part of the sentence is not contained in the question generating that structure.

The error rate of 0.51 derived from the responses to the tasks indicates the difficulty of the structures for a high percentage of the learners. From the table it may be observed that word order is a major problem. Among the responses to ¿Dónde vive Vd.? a number of sentences beginning correctly with the Spanish word order fail to maintain the order to the end. Examples of such sentences are:

*Vivo en la caye, número 36 R . . . Drive
 *Vivo en la calle, número cuatro, C . . .
 *Vivo en la calle V . . . Rd , numero deci seis

Other sentences reveal the English and Creole word order pattern with little relationship to the Spanish structure:

*Vivo en cinco G . . . avenida
 *Vivo en una media G . . . avendia
 *Vivo ocho K . . . avenue
 *Vivo número nueve D . . . Ave

The large number of cases in which the preposition or the article is either wrongly used or omitted suggest that the relationships between the parts of the construction have not been fully recognized and assimilated. The confusion apparent in the sentences which follow

seems to result from the complexity of the language itself:

*Hoy es miercoles es de marzo el trienta y uno

*La fecha es hoy trenta y una de Marzo

*La fecha es hoy trenta y una de Marzo de noventa

Faulty sentence construction may be attributed in part to the seemingly heavy load imposed upon the learner by the additional relationships which must be perceived in the longer sentences. The observation made by Politzer and Staubach (p. 126) that assimilation of the clusters of the language is a necessity to mastery of the new forms seems to be particularly applicable in the case of longer constructions. The need for this kind of approach is demonstrated by the error *La fecha es hoy. Assimilation first of the component clusters of these longer sentences may facilitate the students' perception of each to the whole and finally mastery of the entire structure.

The observation thus far is that the lack of control over the longer constructions reflected in the large number of errors can be attributed to both inter-lingual and intra-lingual difficulties

Responses resulting from task no. 2 which contains the greater part of the structure required in the answer reveal fewer errors, hence less difficulty, when compared with responses to nos. 1 and 3. Students tend therefore to make more errors in exercises requiring freer expression.

7. Object Pronouns: Year IV

Table XXXIII presents the Year IV error types related to object pronouns. The error rate of 0.75 indicate the immense difficulty students experience in acquiring the structures involving these

TABLE XXXIII

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Object Pronouns

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. He will explain the exercises to us
2. and we can practise them (the exercises)
3. the books were given to us
4. opened his eyes and closed them
5. his mother was calling him
6. pretended not to hear her
7. the teacher asks him why he
8. They are going to ask us for
9. he can answer them (the questions)

Classification of Errors:

Post-Verbal position ----- 12

el explicara al nos	eran a nos
explicará los ejercicios a nos (4)	serán dados a nos
pasaban al nos	cerrío los
fue dados de nos	pretendió que no oye la
se dado a nos	

Positional Relationship - Confusion with verb phrases ----- 15

podría ellos	pretenderle a no oirle
podemos practica les	no a escucha ella
podemos practicamoslos (2)	cerran a hacerlo
su mamá llamarlo	el está dejarlos
era llamarla (2)	estara iendo vosotros
era llamaba ello	y responde las
pretenderlo a no oirle	

Positional Relationship with Infinitive ----- 4

no la oir	yendo a pedir nos
nos están a punto de pedir	y responder las

Confusion with Subject Pronouns ----- 8

**podría ellos	no oir ella (2)
está llamando el	**estará iendo vosotros
**era llamaba ello	van a preguntar nosotros
**no a escucha ella	

TABLE XXXIII (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

<u>Pronoun Discounted</u> -----	23
explica el ejercicios a nosotros	el proffesor pregunta qué
y cerro otra vez	el profesor pregunta
y cerrada otra vez (2)	ellos han preguntían para moneda
y cerrar otra vez (2)	ellos fue decir moneda
el madre llamaba (2)	van preguntan por
su madre estaba llamando	y he dijo
su madre había llamada	ellos tiene pregunta para
pretendio no oir	ellos hablan preguntan por
prendiendo no escuchaba	puede responder
la professora pregunta a él	fueron damos a nosotros
<u>Miscellaneous</u> -----	4
van iendo preguntamos para	
nosotros vamos a pregunta	
se esta llamand	
llamando se	
<u>Errors not Calculated</u>	
y pendió	
puede contestarlos	
les puede contesta	

pronouns .

The major problem involved is that of comprehending the positional relationship of the pronoun with the verb. The large number of cases in which the pronoun follows the verb attest to the strong tendency toward transferring the English and Creole word order pattern.

Additional problems consist of the confusion of the object pronoun with two other word classes: the prepositional pronoun and the subject pronoun. Examples of the former class are:

*explicará los ejercicios a nos
*se dado a nos

These examples illustrate that the students recognize the need for the object pronoun form and that the form in this case is known. However, the inclination toward the English pattern has given rise not only to the wrong position of the pronoun, but also to the wrong pronoun form. The latter inaccuracy by which nos is made to function in the prepositional phrase may derive from a fixed connection between us and nos. The Creole structure im explien i tu wi (he explains it to us) in which the subject pronoun form wi is also functioning as a prepositional pronoun accords in this situation with the Spanish pattern. Therefore the students' failure to distinguish between the prepositional pronoun and the object pronoun in Spanish appears to derive from a Spanish-English contrast.

The use of the subject pronoun forms may either result from lack of knowledge of the object pronouns or may be influenced by the redundancy typical of the Spanish construction, as seen in the example,

la encontré a ella en la plaza. The latter case would suggest an intra-lingual problem.

Not easily dissociated from the problem involved in employing the object pronoun is the manipulation of the verb on which it hinges. High error frequency reveals that mismanagement of the verb forms adds to the complexity of the problem of achieving accuracy in the use of the object pronouns. The following examples may be cited:

*pretenderlo a no oírle
 *él está dejarlos
 *podemos practicamoslos

The compound nature of the verb is obviously a difficulty which needs to be overcome before the proper relationship between the verb and the pronoun can be established within the sentence. While the post-verbal position of the pronoun in the last example would be acceptable were the verb phrase correctly expressed, the present combination of verb phrase and pronoun is forbidden. The first three responses seen above suggest that there is an awareness of the concept of linking the pronoun to the infinitive, but the difficulty encountered with the verb results in a muddling of the verb and pronoun concept. An intra-lingual problem is therefore inferred.

Another remarkable problem centres on the tendency of the students to ignore the pronoun. This practice is considered to reflect a withdrawal from a problem which appears to be too difficult. The relative complexity of the Spanish system of object pronouns suggests both inter-lingual and intra-lingual difficulty.

The existence in Spanish of the post-verbal position of the object pronoun could operate intra-lingually to perpetuate the English

and Creole word order pattern in areas which resist it in Spanish.

8. Gustar: Year IV

In Table XXXIV errors related to gustar are presented. The proportion derived from the item types testing this concept is 0.63 which was seen in Part A (i) to represent a high degree of difficulty when measured against the criterion proportion of 0.25.

Table XXXIV shows that the subject pronoun is explicitly or implicitly employed in the majority of cases. It is clear that the word order pattern common to English and Creole is interfering with the formation of the new habit. The pattern is not only typical of English and Creole structures, but embraces the majority of cases in Spanish. Therefore while the problem is viewed as resulting primarily from the students equating gustar with to like, the more general Spanish word order pattern is envisaged as conflicting with the less general, and retarding acquisition of the new structure.

Structural confusion is also reflected in the wrong choice of pronouns. The responses in which the pronoun precedes the verb suggest an advance in learning over the cases previously referred to. However the wrong choice of the pronouns (which could also be a morphological problem) indicates that the structure employing gustar is not fully comprehended. Instances of the use of se appear to represent an intrusion from other aspects of the language. The use of le instead of me could result from over-cautiousness on the part of the student to avoid the person + verb + object pattern.

The class of errors showing subject-verb disagreement is seen

TABLE XXXIV

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Gustar

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. She likes flowers and animals
2. I do not like red wine
3. I will like the streets
4. I do not like red shoes

Classification of Errors:

Structural Confusion:

(i) In relation to subject-pronoun expressed or implied ----- 27

Ella gusta flores (6)	he gustaré las (2)
Yo no gusto (4)	me gusto las calles (2)
Yo no me gusto	gustaré las calles (5)
no me gusto	Yo gusté las calles
Yo no le gusta	Hago no gusto zapato
Yo gusto no	no gusto zapatos
Yo nada el calle gusta	

(ii) In relation to other pronouns ----- 8

se gustarian flores	no le gusta rojo vino
se gusta flores	**yo no le gusta
se gustan flores	le gusta las calles
le no gusta vino	le gustará las calles

(iii) In relation to subject-verb agreement ----- 8

**se gusta flores	**le gusta las
flores y animales gustaría	**le gustará las
me gusta las calles	zapatos rojos no me gusta
me gusta los	no me gusta rojos zapatos

(iv) In relation to other verbs ----- 7

ella quierre flores	querré las (3)
me no quiero	Yo no emo
yo deseare los	

TABLE XXXIV (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Miscellaneous ----- 6

roca no gusta
no gusta
gustaran las calles
vino rojo est non me gusta
me no gusta zapato rojo
los calles iba gustando

generally to approximate the Spanish structure utilizing gustar. While on one level the errors appear to be morphological, the persistence of the singular verb where it should be plural suggests also that the learners are somehow still bound to the more regular sentence pattern.

The use of other verbs, for example querer instead of gustar, appears to be partially a lexical problem which could make even more complex the difficulty of acquiring the concept gustar.

9. Time Clusters: Year IV

Table XXXV presents the Year IV error types obtained from the item types testing the students' ability to use common structures related to the hour. The error rate derived from these items is 0.61 which, in terms of the criterion rate of 0.25, suggests that the learners experience a high level of difficulty in this area.

Redundant use of verbs appears as an outstanding problem. Observation of this class of errors reveals that there is a strong tendency to retain the verb in the present tense despite the recognition of the need for the verb in its past form. Sixteen of the seventeen errors in this class show the persistence of son. Typical errors are:

- *sería son las dos
- *era son las ocho
- *estaba son las ocho
- *estaría son dos y media

The persistence of son seems to denote automaticity achieved during the earlier stage of learning, and the strength of the habit resisting the acquisition of other related aspects of the language. The errors indicate an intra-lingual problem related to the observations on fixity

TABLE XXXV

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Time Clusters (La Hora)

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. at about half-past eight
2. It was probably half-past two
3. It is eight o'clock
4. It was twenty-five minutes past eight
5. We will leave . . . at 10.15.

Classification of Errors:

Redundant use of Verbs ----- 17

estaría son dos y media
sería son las dos (2)
seran son las dos
lo estaría son las dos
es son las ocho (2)
era son las ocho (3)

era despues veinte-cinco minutos
de son las
era son las viente cinco
es era viente cinco
estaba son las ocho (2)
era son la viente cinco
nosotros salir son las diez

Use of "Estar" ----- 6

estarán dos y media
estaría alas dos
**estaría son las

estaban las dos
estaba veinte-cinco
**estaba son las

Omission of Article ----- 11

a ocho y media
a serían ocho y media
**estarán dos y media
**estaría son dos y media
se dos y media

serían dos y media (2)
es ocho
**estaba veinte-cinco minutos
era ocho y veinte y cinco
era ocho y viente sinco

Wrong use of Preposition ----- 8

(i) used with or instead of verb

**estaría alas dos
sería a las dos
a las ocho (4)

era a las ocho
lo sería a las dos

TABLE XXXV (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

(ii) wrong choice of prepositions ----- 13

acerca de las ocho (3)
al aproximente las ocho
proximo las ocho
a las ocho y media (8)

Word Order ----- 7

**era despues veinte-cinco minutos de son las ocho
**era son las viente cinco menos ocho
**es era viente cinco minutos
son las viente cinco minutes de ocho
**era son la viente cinco menos ocho
era vienecinco minutos pasado a las ocho
a las quince y diez

of language structures mentioned in Chapter I. (See page 13).

The instances involving the use of estar instead of ser could be associated with the learners' conception of the hour as an unstable phenomenon. In such a case a conflict with the Spanish linguistic structure employing ser would result.

The next class of errors seen in the table shows a number of instances of omission of the article. Since this element is missing in both English and Creole a contrastive problem is also inferred from this class.

The juxtaposition of the verb and the preposition as seen in *seria a las ocho indicates a confusion of the two structures (clusters) initiated by the verb and the preposition respectively. The verb in its past form seems to introduce some element of complexity into the task.

A source of difficulty too is the acquisition of the common prepositional phrase a eso de or cerca de which forms a cluster with expressions involving the hour. The problem may appear to be lexical, but the frequent occurrence of the phrase with expressions of time suggests combining both into a syntactic whole. In this way the lexical difficulty perceived may be more easily obviated.

Errors involving word order reflect a contrastive difficulty.

10. Adjectives: Year IV

Table XXXVI contains the Year IV error types extracted from item types testing the syntactic relationship between nouns and adjectives. The error rate of 0.36 reflects less difficulty for the Year IV students on this concept than on the foregoing concepts.

TABLE XXXVI

CLASSIFICATION OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Adjectives

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. On the third day
2. to the bus stop
3. I do not like red wine
4. Christmas and the New Year
5. Do not touch the sick boy
6. He is a very fortunate boy

Classification of Errors:Positions ----- 24

al día tercero	el nuevo año (7)
el día tres (2)	el nuevo años
yo gusto no rojo rón	el Año de Nuevo
no me gusta roja vino	un muy afortunado niño (2)
el enfermo nino (3)	mucho afortunado muchacho
el infermo muchacho (2)	un afortunado muchacho (2)

Formed with "de" ----- 5

al automóbél del parada	al automóbil caser
al automobíle parar	al autobus parada
la autobus parar	

Errors not calculated

al autobus (2)
a la autobus
a la omnibusta

Examination of the error types reveals that the English and Creole sequence of adjective + noun is the dominant feature, twenty-five of the twenty-nine errors conforming to this pattern. The formation of the adjective with de, also a point of contrast, appears to be another source of difficulty. Only four errors indicate Spanish influence. The major problem is thus seen to reside in the persistence of "first-language" habits.

The summary of the perceived sources of interference encountered by the students in the process of acquiring the Spanish syntax may be observed in Table XXXVII. The plus sign (+) indicates the source of interference, and an explanation of the intra-linguistic interference is added in brackets where it is considered necessary.

The table reveals that outstandingly the acquisition of syntax is subject to inter-linguistic interference. There are, however, errors which reflect either an intra-linguistic source, or a combination of inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic difficulties. On the basis of these findings the null hypotheses 5 and 6 were rejected.

PART D: LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE FREQUENT MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES

Part D of the study is devoted to the linguistic analysis of the frequent morphological error types to discover whether they reflect inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic interference. Hypotheses 7 and 8 relate to this section of the study. The general principles adopted in Part C for the classification of the syntactic error types are also applicable to the process of classifying the morphological

TABLE XXXVII

SUMMARY OF THE PERCEIVED SOURCES OF SYNTACTICAL ERRORS

Samples of Error Types	Perceived Sources of Interference	
	Inter- linguistic	Intra- linguistic
<u>Articles</u>		
señor García	+	+
no me gustan rojos zapatos	+	
jugaba cricket	+	
aprendo español	+	
el señor es un profesor	+	
las puertas y ventanas	+	
en miércoles	+	
<u>Prepositions</u>		
vemos la madre de Lola	+	+ (vemos el bolso)
es Marta's	+	
son las tres tarde	+	
el día siguiente	+	
salía la casa	+	
escuche a el cuento	+	
me gustare a viajar	+	+ (empezamos a comer)
en el tercer día	+	
a la esquina	+	
consistio de	+	
piensa de	+	+
<u>"Ser" and "Estar"</u>		
la pizarra es en la clase	+	
es sol	+	+
la pieza esta frio	+	+ (el café está frío)
<u>Longer constructions</u>		
vivo en una media G---avendia	+	
la fecha es hoy treinta y una de Marzo de noventa		+ (length of sentence)
<u>Object pronouns</u>		
explicará los ejercicios a nos	+	+
podemos practicamoslos		+

TABLE XXXVII (Continued)

SUMMARY OF THE PERCEIVED SOURCES OF SYNTACTICAL ERRORS

Samples of Error Types	Perceived Sources of Interference	
	Inter- linguistic	Intra- linguistic
<u>Gustar</u>		
ella gusta flores	+	+ (ella corta flores)
se gustan flores		+
<u>Time clusters</u>		
sería son las dos		+
estaban las dos		+
era son las veinte cinco menos ocho	+	
<u>Adjectives</u>		
el nuevo año	+	
al automobile parar	+	

error types.

The order of presentation of the concepts for analysis of the error types is as follows:

1. Adjectives: Year IV
2. Possessive adjectives: Year II and Year IV
3. Indefinite articles: Year II
4. Definite articles: Year IV
5. Present indicative of radical-changing verbs: Year II and Year IV
6. Present indicative of regular verbs: Year II and Year IV
7. Present indicative of irregular verbs and of reflexive verbs: Year II
8. The imperative: Year IV
9. The preterite indicative: Year IV
10. The imperfect indicative: Year IV
11. The present perfect and pluperfect: Year IV
12. Time clusters: Year IV.

1. Adjectives: Year IV

Table XXXVIII presents the error types related to adjectives. Yielding an error rate of 0.60, this concept emerges as a source of much difficulty for the Year IV students.

The table shows difficulty in two areas: number and gender. A high proportion of the errors (twenty-six out of sixty-four) reveals faulty number relationship. The Spanish concept of relating the adjective to the noun in number is clearly a point of contrast with

TABLE XXXVIII

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Adjectives

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. was wearing small
2. brown shoes
3. this morning
4. the second time
5. How cold the water was
6. My friends are tired
and sad
7. The shops will be full of
8. The wheels are big
9. for the second time
10. your new bicycle
11. the questions are not difficult

Classification of Errors:

Number relationship ----- 26

zapatos pequeño (2)	las tiendas lleno (4)
azul	las ruedas grande (8)
mis amigos frestado	larga
cansado (4)	
triste (5)	

Gender relationship ----- 41

este manana (2)	**las tiendas lleno (4)
esta día	las ruedas largos (3)
el segundo vez (12)	bicicleta nuevo (3)
el agua frio (11)	el secunda tiempo
frío (3)	el segundo hora

Miscellaneous ----- 1

el agua frezco

Errors not calculated

el segundo tiempo
el tiempo segundo

TABLE XXXVIII (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

el segundo priso
el seguido tiempo
el seguno

English and Creole pattern. The new orientation required for mastery of this peculiarly Spanish concept has obviously not been acquired by a high percentage of the learners.

Item types related to gender agreement present an even greater problem, forty-one of the sixty-four errors belonging to this class. Errors such as *las tiendas lleno, *las ruedas largos, like those referred to in the previous class, reflect language conflict. However, other difficulties are suggested by the fact that two items, *el segundo vez and *el agua frio account for more than fifty per cent of the errors in this group. Both errors reveal wrong gender assignment to the nouns, hence the wrong adjectives. Failure to identify the correct gender of vez accords with Stockwell's observation that a more serious problem exists when the noun is not marked with a gender marking suffix, either o or a. (p. 47). An immediate consequence seems to be the aggravation of the problem of selecting the appropriate adjective. The problem of assigning the correct gender to vez is clearly an internal one, arising from the absence of any grammatical cue in Spanish.

The error *el agua frio relates to still another problem suggesting even greater complexity. By the selection of the correct determiner el the learners are subsequently misled into depending upon it as a guide to gender. The extension of the function of el beyond the general rule of signalling the masculine noun has apparently not been learned.

Both language contrasts and complexities within the target language are perceived as creating difficulty in the process of

relating the adjective to the noun.

2. Possessive Adjectives: Year II and Year IV

The Year II and the Year IV error types pertaining to possessive adjectives are classified in Tables XXXIX and XL. The respective proportions of errors yielded by the item types examined are 0.31 and 0.33, both suggesting that the concept presents a fair level of difficulty to the two groups of students.

The problem for both groups centre on number and person relationships. Gender is not a problem, both tables showing a score of two in this area. This is probably due to the fact that the possessive adjectives are not generally marked for gender, and as seen in the tables the marked forms are erroneously displaced by the unmarked forms. Errors of number agreement reveal the tendency to associate number with the possessor instead of with the thing or things possessed. That is, the inflection is added or dropped according to the number of possessors. Errors illustrating the misconception are:

*sus escuela (our)	*mi amigos (my)
*sus perro (their)	*su exámenes (his)
*mi calcetines (my)	

The number relationship between the adjective and the thing possessed is a new percept for the English and Creole speaker, hence the difficulty encountered by still a fair percentage of the students.

Among the error types pertaining to person relationship it is remarkable that the first person plural forms, nuestra, etc. appear as a problem for both groups of students. Errors reveal a dominance

TABLE XXXIX

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR II

Concept: Possessive Adjectives

Tasks:

(Conversational-type)

1. ¿Cuántas personas hay en su familia?
 2. ¿Son cubanos tus padres?
 3. ¿Cuántas pizarras hay en su clase?
 4. ¿Cuántas habitaciones hay en tu casa?
- (Completion)
5. our escuela
 6. my calcetines
 7. their perro

Classification of Errors:

Number relationship ----- 18

mi padres	sus perro (3)
mis casa	mi calcetines (10)
sus escuela (3)	

Gender relationship ----- 2

nuestro escuela (2)

Person relationship ----- 26

(correct form: mi)

su familia (3)	tu casa (4)
su clase (2)	

(correct form: nuestra)

su escuela (8)	vuestra escuela (4)
**sus escuela (3)	mi escuela

(correct form: su)

tu perro

Errors not calculated

en yo casa
vosotros escuela (2)

TABLE XXXIX (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR II

noestra escuela
vosotros perro (2)
ellos perro
nosotros perro
se familia
me familia
me padres

TABLE XL

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Possessive Adjectives

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. our teachers
2. his sister
3. my friends
4. our relative's apartment
5. your holidays
6. their parents
7. our idea
8. his examinations

Classification of Errors:

Number relationship ----- 13

mi amigos (3)	su vacaciones (3)
nuestro parientes	su exámenes (6)

Gender relationship ----- 2

nuestro idea (2)

Person relationship ----- 13

(correct form: nuestros)

sus familias	sus pacientes
sus parientes (3)	sus primos

(correct form: nuestra)

su idea (4)	tu idea (2)
-------------	-------------

(correct form: nuestros, as)

su profesora

Errors not calculated

nuestros profesores	este hermano
---------------------	--------------

of su which suggests a tendency to the form more regularly used. All five adjectives, his, her, their, your (formal), its are expressed by the single form su. It is noteworthy that there is less interference from vuestra which bears such a close formal resemblance to nuestra, but which is less frequently used than su. Whereas the error types relating to number reflect inter-lingual difficulty, those relating to person are considered to relate to the Spanish system itself.

3. Indefinite Articles: Year II

Error types relating to the indefinite articles are classified in Table XLI. Viewed from the error rate of 0.32 the concept is considered to present only a fair degree of difficulty to the Year II students.

The classification of the error types reveals that number and gender relationship between the indefinite article and the noun are not serious problems. The major difficulty resides in transforming from un to the expression in the plural. Twenty of the twenty-eight errors reflect this difficulty. The source of the problem is not clear. It may be that in attempting to follow the English and Creole pattern whereby the singular and the plural determiners are different words, a, some; a, so, the students have not learned the variant unos. The greater number of errors in this class, eighteen out of twenty, reveal the tendency to find a different word. The use of son in nine of those eighteen cases suggests that students are tending to equate son with some. The unfamiliarity with unos could also result intra-lingually from infrequent usage since the synonym algunos and the

TABLE XLI

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY
ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR II

Concept: Indefinite Articles

Tasks :

(Conversation-type)

1. ¿Qué es la oveja?
2. ¿Es Anita un muchacho?
- (Translation)
3. Ella necesita _____ (a red pencil)
- (Transformation - to plural form)
4. Yo compro un caramelo
5. Hay un encendedor en

Classification of Errors:

Number relationship ----- 2

la oveja es una frutas hay un encendedores

Gender relationship ----- 6

la oveja es una animal	un muchacha (2)
una roja lápiz	una muchacho
una lapiz rojo	

```
Incorrect transformation----- 20
```

son caramelos (7)	en encendedores
muchos caramelos (2)	son encendedores (2)
uns caramelos	muchos encendedores (2)
mucho caramelos	los encendedores (2)
los caramelos	uns encendedores

Errors not calculated

la oveja	es a oír con	la oveja es delante de
	es está en la cabeza	esta roja el lapiz

total absence of the plural determiner as seen in compro caramelos offer alternatives.

4. Definite Articles: Year IV

The classes of error types involving the definite article are seen in Table XLII. The error rate of 0.26 yielded by the item types indicates that the concept poses only a fair degree of difficulty to the Year IV students.

Two areas of difficulty emerge: number and gender relationship with the noun. In relation to number, language differences appear as the only discernible source of difficulty. Whereas English and Creole forms the and di require no number identification, the Spanish forms do. The learner is thus presented with a new kind of linguistic relationship which he has to perceive.

Gender appears to be more difficult. The observation made previously with respect to the concept of adjectives that students seek for the o, a noun cues to assign genders to the adjectives does not seem to apply in the case of the definite articles. Thirteen of the twenty-three errors in this class of error types show wrong gender assignment to nouns with o and a affixes. Other errors seem to accord with the observation of dependence on these affixes as, for example, *las guardias, *las policia but they constitute minority cases. The indication is that while intra-lingual influence may be inferred in a few cases, the element of contrast between the languages exerts a stronger force.

TABLE XLII

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Definite Articles

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. the same thing
2. at the cobbler's
3. the exercises
4. the kitchen
5. the room
6. the Spaniards
7. the doors
8. to the policeman
9. the double-decker buses
10. the teachers
11. the questions

Classification of Errors:

Number relationship ----- 15

el ejercicios	la autobuses
del españoles	los autobus
el espanoles	el dos pisos autobuses
la puertas (2)	el profesoras
el puertas	la profesores
las policia	el preguntas
el autobuses	el questiones

Gender relationship ----- 23

lo mismo cosa	**las policia
del cocina	**la autobuses
el cocina	**la profesores
del la cocina	los profesoras
la cuarto (3)	los cuestiones
la español	las preguntas
el española	**el preguntas
**el puertas	**el cuestiones
las guardias (3)	**el profesoras
la guardia	

Errors not calculated

al zapatero (4)	a el zapatadero
a el zapatero	

5. Present Indicative of Radical Changing Verbs: Year II and Year IV

Tables XLIII and XLIV show the classes of error types obtained respectively from the Year II and the Year IV responses involving the concept of the present indicative of radical changing verbs. With the respective proportions of 0.34 and 0.30 the concept is viewed as denoting a fair level of difficulty for each group of students.

The main classes of error types emerging from the responses relate to person-number relationship and mismanagement of stem vowel-change for both Year II and Year IV, deviant verb forms for Year II, and confusion with other verb classes for Year IV. A verb form is considered deviant if it does not exist within the corpus of the verbs deriving from a particular infinitive.

In relation to the items examined, the data reveal that the problem of person-number agreement tends to be reduced at the Year IV level. This phenomenon may result from the additional two years of repeated experience with the inflectional pattern of the verb. The Year II errors suggest that the concept of conjugation is still a difficulty and indicate the relative linguistic immaturity of the Year II students compared with the Year IV students.

In relation to the stem vowel of the verb, the majority of the Year II errors conform to the forms as they exist in the tasks, revealing that the students are little aware of the rules governing the changing of the stem vowel. Ignorance of the verbs which take the change is also a possibility. Compared with the problem of conjugation, the problem of the stem change is a more persistent one for the Year IV

TABLE XLIII

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM TYPES
FOR YEAR II

Concept: Present Indicative of Radical - Changing Verbs

Tasks:

(Transformations)

Model sentence: Preferimos ir al cine

1. Juan y yo _____

2. Vds. _____

Model sentence: El profesor no viene hoy

3. Nosotros _____

4. Pepe _____

(Transformation from infinitive)

5. Nosotros _____ dinero (tener)

(Reading Comprehension)

6. ¿Qué quieren las otras muchachas?

Classification of Errors:

Person - number relationship ---- 13

Juan y yo prefieren

preferes

prefero

Vds. preferimos

Pepe no vengo

vienes

Las muchachas no queremos (5)

tenemos (2)

Deviant verb forms ----- 18

Juan y yo preferemos

prefierimos

Vds preferin

Nosotros no vienemos (6)

no venemos (2)

teneamos

teneimos

tenermos

teneramos

Las muchachas no querean

quiran

quiren

Mismanagement of stem change ---- 13

**preferes

**prefero

**preferin

**vienemos (6)

**prefierimos

**querean

**quiran

**quiren

TABLE XLIII (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM TYPES
FOR YEAR II

<u>Failure to transform from infinitives</u>	-----	3
--	-------	---

Vds. preferir

**Nosotros tenermos

**teneramos

<u>Miscellaneous</u>

Nosotros teniendo dinero

TABLE XLIV

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Present Indicative of Radical - Changing Verbs

Tasks:

(Deriving verb form from infinitive)

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. mostrar: yo | 7. the examination starts |
| 2. mostrar: ellos | 8. he can answer |
| 3. pedir: ella | 9. he has to go |
| 4. pedir: nosotros | |
| 5. volver : Vds. | |
| (Translation) | |
| 6. this boy thinks about | |

Classification of Errors:

Person-number relationship ----- 5

ellos mostramos	el examenes empeza (2)
nosotros pierden	
pedian	

Mismanagement of stem change ---- 10

yo mostro	esta muchacho pensa
nosotros no pidimos	el examenes empeza (2)
**pierden	
ella pida	
piede (2)	
pedio	

Confusion with other verb classes ----- 15

nosotros pedemos (4)	Vds vuelvan (2)
pidamos	tenia ir
**pierden	**pedio
**pedian	volverán
ella **pida	
pida	

Errors not calculated

has de ir
hizo ir

students. Where the change is not disregarded, errors reflect confusion resulting from complexities within the language. For example, *pieda, *piede are traced to confusion with perder.

A medley of verb forms reflecting students' confusion of the structures of the Spanish verbs may be seen among the class of Year II errors designated "deviant". The Year IV errors also reveal confusion of the structures, but more in relation to other legitimate forms. Instances of deviance are rarer among the Year IV errors.

An obviously striking contrast with English and Creole is the extensiveness of the Spanish verb system which, conceivably, is a pervasive problem, since many new perceptions need to be formed by the learner. It is however within the Spanish system itself that the problem of interference for a fair percentage of the learners is clearly observed.

6. Present Indicative of Regular Verbs: Year II and Year IV

The Year II and Year IV error types related to the concept of the present indicative of regular verbs are classified in Tables XLV and XLVI respectively. The error rates of 0.37 and 0.29 favouring Year IV suggest that this class of verbs presents a fair level of difficulty to the learners.

Examination of Table XLV reveals that all the Year II classes of error types seem to be complementary, in that they indicate primarily difficulty with the task of conjugating the verb. Error types show inappropriate number, confusion between the infinitive classes as well as between the verb endings themselves, retention of the infinitive

TABLE XLV

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR II

Concept: Present Indicative of Regular Verbs

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. Ana and Philip speak Spanish
2. If we study at home
3. we understand
4. I permit him to

(Transformation)

5. Los alumnos _____ (contestar)
6. Yo no _____ la carta (comprender)
7. María _____ un regalo (recibir)
8. Mi hermano y yo _____ con (vivir)
9. ¿_____ Vd. la puerta. . .? (abrir)
10. Los alumnos (contestar) bien.
11. Pepe (comer) la toronja.

Classification of Errors:

Person-number relationship ----- 40

Ana y Felipe habla (3)	María reciben
hablo (2)	recibes
hablamos	recibimos
Vosotros studamos	Pepe comes
Yo comprende (5)	comen
comprendermos	como (2)
perimeten	Vd. abriro
permitten	abrirmos
permite (3)	abro
permiteron	Nosotros comprendies
permite	Mi hermana y yo vivo
Los alumnos contestáis	
contestamos	
contesta (4)	
contesto	
contestaimos	

Deviant verb forms ----- 18

**Vosotros studamos
 Los alumnos contestos
 **contestaimos
 Yo perimetto
 perimeten

TABLE XLV (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR II

permitirero
 **permitte
 **permitten
 **comprendermos
 **Maria recibirmos
 Vd. abrine
 **abriro
 **abrirmos
 Pepe comar
 **Nosotros comprendies
 Mi hermana y yo vivirmos
 vivemos (2)

Verb endings not appropriate to infinitive class ----- 8

Maria reciba	Vd. abri (2)
recibi	abra
Mi hermana y yo vivi	Pepe coma
vivamos	nosotros comprendamos

Failure to transform from infinitives ----- 11

**Yo no comprendermos	Los alumnos contestar
**Maria recibirmos	Pepe comer (3)
**Mi hermana y yo vivirmos	**comar
**Vd. abriro	Vosotros estudiar
**abrirmos	

Errors not calculated

Yo perimito

TABLE XLVI

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM TYPES
FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Present Indicative of Regular Verbs

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. he remains at home
2. the teacher asks. . .why
3. Every night he reads
4. I do not write
5. which I need

Classification of Errors:

Person - number relationship ---- 5

la profesora pregunto
el leo (2)
yo no escribe (2)

Confusion with other verb classes ----- 14

el lea (7)
yo no escriba
el vendre
el quede
yo no escrito (2)
el remanar en
yo no escribir

Errors not calculated

yo querre
querro

form and affixation of inflectional endings to the infinitive. A high proportion of deviant verb forms accrue from these difficulties.

As may be observed in Table XLVI the major Year IV problem is that of confusing the present indicative of the regular verb with other verb classes. The imperative lea accounting for half the number of its class of errors may be an automatic response resulting from frequent usage in the classroom by the teacher.

While the Year II and the Year IV errors, for the most part, differ in nature, they reflect the common element of intra-language interference. The learners' problem of transition from a relatively simple verb system to a much more complex one, an inter-lingual problem, is more evident among the Year II responses.

7. Present Indicative of Irregular Verbs and of Reflexive Verbs: Year II

Tables XLVII and XLVIII respectively contain the classes of Year II error types yielded by item types related to the present indicative of irregular verbs and of reflexive verbs. Both concepts have been juxtaposed to avoid unnecessary repetition. Each concept is represented by its proportion (0.36 for irregular verbs and 0.27 for reflexive verbs) as being fairly difficult for the Year II students.

A comparison of Tables XLVII and XLVIII with the two preceding Year II tables showing errors made in the use of verbs reveals a similarity in the area of person-number relationship. The general observation of the pattern of conjugation being a source of major difficulty to the Year II students is also applicable in the case of

TABLE XLVII

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR II

Concept: Present Indicative of Irregular Verbs

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. I know the rule
2. You and I are cousins
3. _____ el mapa en (I put)
4. He puts the grapes
(Conversation-type)
5. ¿Eres tu trinitaria ?
(Transformation - from infinitive)
6. El pollo no _____ huevos (poner)
7. María (ser) mi hermana
8. Yo (estar) a la derecha
9. Yo (dar) quince monedas
10. ¿Qué (hacer) ellos?
(Transformation - to singular)
11. Nosotros sabemos

Classification of Errors:Person - number relationship ---- 30

Usted y yo son (7)	es jamaican
el acabo	soy es Jamaica
el pudieron	no eres trinitari
yo sabe (3)	yo dan quince modenas
yo estan(2)	Yo da (3)
Qué hace ellos (6)	el pollo pono
Qué haceis ellos	ponero

Mismanagement of irregular forms ----- 16

yo do quince monedas (3)	yo su jamaicana
yo esto a la derecha	yo este
yo sabo (4)	yo soy (instead of sé)
María sa mi hermana	eres tu jamaicana
María se mi hermana (3)	

Omission of accent mark ----- 8

yo se (6)
 **yo estan (2)

TABLE XLVII (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR II

Miscellaneous ----- 6

el pollo no ponea

pona

nosotra sabema

nosotro sabemo

Que hacer

yo dar

Errors not calculated

yo salgo

veo

hago (4)

punto

yo pongo

María sabe

usted y yo hay

TABLE XLVIII

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR II

Concept: Present Indicative of Reflexive Verbs

Tasks:

(Conversation type)

1. ¿Cómo te llamas? (2)
2. ¿Cómo se llama usted?

Classification of Errors:

Person - number relationship ----- 16

mi llama (3)	mellama
mí llama	me allama
me llama (9)	me llamas

Mismanagement of pronoun ----- 9

**mi llama (3)	se llamo (2)
**mí llama	llamo
mi llamo (2)	

Miscellaneous ----- 6

tu te llama	me allamo
tu te llamas (2)	my como
él se llama	

Errors not calculated

mellamo (9)

the irregular and the reflexive verbs.

Analogy with the pattern of conjugation of regular verbs is observed in responses related to the irregular verbs. Errors illustrating the tendency are:

*yo do quince monedas
 *yo esto a la derecha
 *yo sabo
 *María se mi hermana

These errors are viewed as reflecting an intra-lingual difficulty due to overgeneralization.

Mismanagement of the reflexive pronoun seen in Table XLVIII is of some note in that a number of students selected mi instead of me in relation to the expression me llamo. Direct correspondence between the three structures mi llama, my name and mi niem (Creole) could occasion the misuse of mi.

8. The Imperative: Year IV

Table XLIX presents the classification of the Year IV error types obtained from the Year II responses related to the imperative. The proportion of errors derived for this concept (0.67) suggests that the students experience a high degree of difficulty in the attempt to acquire mastery of the concept.

The table shows that a major problem is the intrusion of other verb classes, the present indicative in particular. This observed tendency of the students to resort to the present indicative may be explained from the standpoint that that is the aspect of the verb which is better known and with which students have presumably had the

TABLE XLIX

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: The Imperative

Tasks:

(Deriving verb form from infinitive)

1. Reirse: Vd.
2. No dormir: Vds.
(Translation)
3. Charles, get up!
4. Do not touch (usted) the
5. Listen to the story
6. Tell (usted) Peter that
7. Do not return (ustedes) without

Classification of Errors:

Person-number relationship ----- 3

no volva ustedes (2) hace vuelta ustedes

Confusion with other verb classes:

(i) Present indicative ----- 12

duermense	levanto
se levanta	no toca (4)
llevanto	no vuelven (3)
llevanto	

(ii) Preterite indicative ----- 5

duermieron	no tocó
levantó (2)	reio se

(iii) Infinitive ----- 5

reirse	rieirse
levantarse	no tocar
esuchar	

(iv) Others ----- 6

reía se
dormían
no toce (4)

TABLE XLIX (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

<u>Accent Mark</u> ----- 9	
riase	levantate (7)
riáse	
<u>Mismanagement of reflexive pronoun</u> ----- 13	
**reía se	llevante
rea se	**llevanto
**reio se	**levantó (2)
**duermense	**llevento
levante (3)	**levanto
<u>Mismanagement of radical-changing verbs</u> ----- 8	
**no volva (2)	duermieron
no volvan (2)	reio se
rea se	rieirse
<u>Errors not calculated</u>	
llevar	lo Pedro que

longest acquaintance. It may be recalled that the Year IV error rates derived for concepts related to the present indicative (0.29, 0.30) indicate that there is a greater degree of mastery of that tense.

Another problem is envisaged, however. The use in English and Creole of one form of the verb to express both the present indicative and the imperative coincides with the Spanish pattern in the majority of cases involving the informal imperative. Complication seems to result from the use of another aspect of the verb in Spanish to express the formal imperative. The problem therefore suggests itself as a combination of both intra-lingual and inter-lingual influences deriving from (i) the existence in Spanish of two aspects of the verb to express the imperative, one of which coincides with the present indicative form and (ii) the existence in English and Creole of only one form to express both the imperative and the present indicative.

Appearing as another area of difficulty is the affixing of the accent mark. Eight of the nine errors recorded in this area reveal the tendency of students to omit the mark. While this tendency may be attributed to the difference between English and Spanish observed earlier, it may also be traced intra-lingually to the absence of the mark from other aspects of the verb. This observation accords with Teschner's allusion to the difficulty experienced by both Anglo and Spanish-speaking students.⁴

Mismanagement of the reflexive verb, emerging as yet another area of difficulty, takes the form of the misplacement and omission of

⁴Richard Vincent Teschner, "The Written Accent in Spanish: A Programmed Lesson," Hispania, Vol. 54, No. 4, December, 1971, pp. 885-894.

the reflexive pronoun, the latter appearing to be the more persistent problem. Since in English the reflexive pronoun is consistently separated from the verb, the concept of affixing the reflexive pronoun to the verb form is a new phenomenon for the learners. This difference could result in the practice of omitting the pronoun. Another contributory factor could be the irregularity in Spanish whereby a verb can be both reflexive and non-reflexive.

As observed in the table the radical-changing verbs are another source of difficulty. The retention of the stem vowels o in volver and e in reirse suggests that students are inclining to the more regular pattern in Spanish. Again, the irregularities within the target language appear to create added difficulties.

9. The Preterite Indicative: Year IV

In Table L error types pertaining to the concept of the preterite indicative are classified. A high degree of difficulty for the Year IV students is denoted by the error rate of 0.65.

Error types observed in the use of the preterite indicative reveal difficulties similar to those observed in relation to the preceding concept, the imperative. Similar classes of errors which, as a consequence, will be overlooked relate to radical-changing and reflexive verbs.

Observation of Tables XLIX and L in conjunction with Table XIX, which shows the number of tasks performed in relation to the imperative and the preterite indicative, will reveal that roughly one-quarter of the errors made on each concept take the form of the present indicative

TABLE L

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: The Preterite Indicative

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. Mr. Garcia did not say anything
2. he again saw the
3. the owner replied
4. My father woke up late this morning
5. Charles opened his eyes
6. He bathed
7. and dressed in eight minutes
8. what did your mother say?
9. John forgot the plan
10. They spent a fortnight
11. Last week Mary saw a
12. This morning I put two
13. what did your mother say?
14. Last night my friend did not sleep

Classification of Errors:

Person-number relationship ----- 8

el no di nada	ellos pensó
contestamos	pensamos
abri	pase
su madre dije	
pude	

Confusion with other verb classes:

(i) Imperfect indicative ----- 9

el volvía a ver	María veía
veía (2)	veaba
se lavaba	mi padre desperdía se
se vestía	
duermia	

(ii) Present indicative ----- 34

él no dice (3)
contestá
mi padre levanta
se despierta

TABLE L (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

despierta	yo pongo (4)
se acuesta	mi amigo no hace bueno
se despierta	no duerme
tu madre dice (14)	no hace duerme
pregunta	veó el perro
hace tu mama hace	
ellos pasan	
(iii) <u>Infinitive</u> -----	9
el abrir	él vestirse (3)
bañarse	dejar olvidado
lavarse	pasar
penar	
(iv) <u>Others</u> -----	11
ha dejado olvidado	él pasado
se ha olvidado	ellos pasaran
él abierto (3)	ella vera
olvido	su madre diga
despiertese	
<u>Accent Mark</u> -----	17
vío (3)	lavo
abrio (4)	se vistío (2)
abrío (2)	dijó (3)
bano	dejo olvidado
<u>Mismanagement of radical-changing verbs</u> -----	10
dispirtió	vestió (5)
**se despirta	se vestió (2)
se despirtío	
<u>Mismanagement of reflexive verbs</u> -----	19
dispirtió	**bano
**levanta	**lavo
**desperdía se	lavó
**despierta	**vestió (5)
dispietase	vistió (2)
baño (4)	

TABLE L (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IVDeviant verb forms ----- 38

**vío (3)	pudio
contestió	durmo
**despirtió	paseron (2)
**desperdía se	decio
daron	**vestió (5)
**se despirtió	**se vistió (2)
se despertió	**se vestió (2)
**se despirta	**dispietase
abró	hospedrando
**abrío (2)	se levó
dejío olvidad	**duermia
pasio	**dijó (3)
**veaba	
dijío	

Errors not calculated

él se abrigo	él vemidio
--------------	------------

form of the verb. There is therefore repeated evidence that students are resorting to the aspect of the verb which is better known. The imperfect indicative and the infinitive, each with a score of nine, denote a source of interference in the acquisition of the preterite indicative, but are strikingly less obtruding than the present indicative.

The high incidence of deviant verb forms related to the preterite form of the verb partially attests to the difficulty caused by the irregular nature of this Spanish concept. The most consistent errors are those showing confusion of the inflections ió and ó, and mishandling of the stem vowels. A remarkable observation is that a far greater proportion of deviant verb forms is produced on items relating to the preterite than on those items relating to previous concepts. The greater complexity of the preterite system is deduced.

Among the error types pertaining to the accent mark ten of the seventeen errors with misplaced or unnecessary marks indicate the students' awareness of the mark as a characteristic of the preterite tense, but confusion deriving from the irregularity of the system. The other seven errors could result from inter-language as well as intra-language differences, as noted previously in relation to the accent mark.

As mentioned before, the complexity of the Spanish verbal system requires of the English and Creole speaker the acquisition of new perceptions, and is consequently an ever-present problem. The data related to the preterite indicative reveal that this complexity manifests itself intra-lingually in the students' tendency toward the present

indicative and deviant verb forms in particular, and more generally in the confusion with other verb classes.

10. The Imperfect Indicative: Year IV

Table LI shows the classes of error types derived from the Year IV responses related to the concept of the imperfect indicative. The error rate of 0.28 yielded by the item types presents a remarkable contrast with the proportion of 0.65 yielded by item types testing the preterite indicative. There is clear evidence that in relation to the item types examined the imperfect indicative denotes a simpler learning task. This remarkable difference between the two tenses invites close examination.

The occurrence of only one error which deviates from the inflectional ending ía proper to the imperfect tense (that is salia observed in the miscellaneous class) is evidence that the more regular verb pattern entails less difficulty for the learner. The high incidence of verbs deviating from the preterite forms was noted above. Regularity of pattern is thus observed to be facilitative in the learning process.

Another important aspect to the difference between the preterite and the imperfect may be explained from the responses to the tasks. In the class of errors representing confusion with the preterite tense, it will be observed that the greater number of errors relate to the expression he wished which in its form gives no clue as to which of the past indicative tenses is to be selected. The very few errors or absence of errors on the tasks, numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 8 and 9, even

TABLE LI

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: The Imperfect Indicative

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. Mr. García used to leave the . . .
2. and walk
3. a dog which was wearing
4. (he was in a hurry) and wished to catch
5. his mother was calling
6. He was very sleepy
7. it was cold in the room
8. his sister was leaving
9. He was thinking about

Classification of Errors:

Person - number relationship ----- 0

Confusion with other verb classes:

(i) Preterite indicative ----- 12

un perro tuvo en	él no quiso coger
fue llevando	quieró coger
él no deseo llegar	el se sentió
deseó tomar (2)	fue muy fria
debó	su madre llamo
quiso tomar	

(ii) Present indicative ----- 10

su madre esta llamando	está frío en la pieza
él esta muy sueno	es estaba frío
tiene mucho sueño	su hermana está salir
esta muy despertar	está saliendo
la cuarto esta hace frio	él piensa de

(iii) Others ----- 2

un perro usado
su madre había llamada

Miscellaneous ----- 3

salia ir

TABLE LI (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY ITEM
TYPES FOR YEAR IV

piensaba de
al llegaba por

Errors not calculated

decía suyo exámenes
el madre bengal el

including the errors observed in the class related to the present indicative, suggest that the forms of the English structures are relied upon as signals of the imperfect tense. Cues to the preterite tense are more elusive, hence the greater learning task which it presents.

Although the Spanish-English equivalence is observed to be facilitative on the other hand, errors associated with he wished illustrate its negative influence in areas where the equivalence is not operative. The need to understand the concept underlying the formal structure of the verb is thus strongly suggested.

The class of errors assuming the present indicative form attest to the intra-lingual problem resulting from the present indicative tense.

11. The Present Perfect and Pluperfect: Year IV

The Year IV error types yielded by item types pertaining to the present perfect and pluperfect tenses are classified in Table LII. The proportions of 0.61 suggests that these tenses represent an area of much difficulty for the Year IV students.

The errors in this area provide further evidence that number agreement between the subject (person) and the verb is not a serious problem. An outstanding area of difficulty is again found to be confusion with other verb classes. Forty-two errors are recorded in this area embracing the present indicative, the preterite indicative and the imperfect indicative as the major verb classes. To avoid repetition of previous analysis the present indicative class will not

TABLE LII

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY
ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Present Perfect and Pluperfect Tenses

Tasks:

(Translation)

1. When he has not taken breakfast
2. I have never been to Madrid
3. They have gone home
4. Have you (usted) seen
5. We have written all
6. he had spent the time
7. he has decided

Classification of Errors:

Person - number agreement ----- 5

Usted ¿Tendras visto	el he decidia
Habes ve	se desayuno
Veras mi	

Haber + wrong verb form ----- 7

he iba	ha diciendo
han iban	ha decide
han veniendo	**he decidía
**habes ve	

Confusion with other verb classes:

(i) Present indicative ----- 10

el se desayuna	Yo no voy a
**se desayuno	nunca voy a
pasa	Usted va mi
eso pensa	Nosotros escribimos (2)
**ha decide	

(ii) Preterite indicative ----- 14

no fui a	Usted vío
nunca fui a	él pasó (4)
ninguno fui a	querío
**no estuve (2)	decidió
ellos fuiron	decidió

TABLE LII (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY
ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR IV

(iii) Imperfect indicative ----- 8

ellos iban (2)	**he decidía
usted veía	han iba
nosotros escribíamos	han iban
Hoy decidía	

(iv) Others ----- 10

no había ido	venga
ha pensado	iran
ha pasado (2)	**veras
escribamos (2)	

Omission of auxiliary forms of "haber" ----- 33

**se desayuno	**no estuve (2)
**se desayuna	**ellos fueron
**desayune	**usted vio
**pasa	**veía
**eso piensa	**él pasó (4)
**no voy a	**querío
**nunca voy a	**decidió
**usted va mi	**decidió
**nosotros escribimos (2)	**venga
**escribíamos	**iran
**escribamos (2)	**veras
**nunca fui a	**quiero
**no fui a	
**ellos iban (2)	

Deviant verb forms ----- 7

**fuión	**veniendo
**habes	quiero
hodie	deseyune
habemos	escribido

Errors not calculated

(i) Confusion with "tener" (Syntactic)

tengo nunca vi	**tendras visto
no tengo voy	tiene ha visto
tengo a poner	tiene ha vuelto

TABLE LII (Continued)

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY
ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR IV

(ii) Others

no ha tocado
no ha tendado

no he sido
no ha tomado desayunar

be specifically analyzed.

Approximately fifty per cent of the forty-two errors indicate the problem of distinguishing the perfect or pluperfect from either the preterite or the imperfect indicative. Notably forms of haber appear with the imperfect tense, or the perfect and pluperfect are displaced entirely by the indicative past, the latter being the main tendency. The absence of formal distinction between the past participle and the past indicative of many English verbs, for example, spent, decided, constitutes a contrast with Spanish and may be responsible partially for the difficulty. In addition, the distinct past participial form gone is being equated with the indicative aspects of the Spanish verb, past as well as present. Examples of errors are:

*no fui a
*nunca fui a

*ellos iban
*no voy a

High incidence of omission of the forms deriving from haber suggests the presence of a more powerful element than the urge to find one-to-one correspondence between the languages. Thirty-three such errors are recorded. These suggest that the auxiliary is of no consequence, thus reflecting general unawareness of the concept of the perfect and pluperfect tenses. Obviously, the origin of the difficulty is not wholly the English system. Rather, a part of the difficulty may be imputed to the Creole system which, unlike English and Spanish, does not normally distinguish between the perfect tense, the past indicative and the present indicative. The following example illustrates the relationship between the three languages:

<u>Creole</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
im si di bod	he sees the bird	ve el pájaro
	he has seen the bird	ha visto el pájaro
	he saw the bird	(veía) vio el pájaro

An important question arising out of this situation is whether the Creole system exerts any influence on the perception of the perfect and pluperfect tenses in English.

While the observed differences between the languages are considered to denote difficulty for the learners, a point of query is the possibility of the compound nature of the verb per se being an additional source of difficulty.

12. Time Clusters: Year IV

Table LIII presents the morphological error types related to time clusters. It may be recalled that the morphological and the syntactical error types were obtained from the same sample of item types. It is to be noted that the proportions (0.61 and 0.39) reveal syntax to be a much greater problem than morphology.

Subject-verb agreement repeatedly observed previously to denote no real difficulty for the Year IV students is now seen to constitute a major problem. The unusual nature of the Spanish structure in which the subject is not immediately apparent is suggested as the main source of the difficulty. A contrast with the basic subject-verb structure of English and Creole is also implied. The high incidence of the use of the singular verb indicates that students are associating the subject with it. Therefore, although automaticity of the structure appears to be achieved in the present tense (as noted earlier in

TABLE LIII

CLASSIFICATION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES YIELDED BY
ITEM TYPES FOR YEAR IV

Concept: Time Clusters
(La Hora)

Tasks:
(Translation)

1. at about half-past eight
2. It was probably half-past two
3. It is eight o'clock
4. It was twenty-five minutes past eight
5. We will leave at 10:15

Classification of Errors:

Subject - Verb Agreement ----- 23

estaría a las dos	era a las ocho
lo sería a las dos	era despues veinte-cinco
estaría son dos	era son las veinte cinco
estaba las dos	es era veinte cinco
sería son las dos (2)	era son las ocho
lo estaría son las dos	estaba son las ocho
sería a las dos	era ocho y veinte
es son las ocho (2)	era son la veinte cinco
es ocho	era ocho y veinte sinco
era son las ocho	era vienecinco minutos
estaba veinte-cinco minutos	

Persistence of Present Indicative ----- 28

seran son	**estaba son
**estaría son	**son las veinte
**sería son (2)	**son las ocho (5)
**estaría son	nosotros salir son las diez
**era son (3)	**era despues veinte minutos de
**es era	son las ocho
**es son las ocho y (2)	son las veinte
**era son las ocho	
es ocho y	
son las ocho y (5)	

Miscellaneous ----- 3

a la ocho
a los ocho
eran las ocho (instead of son)

relation to syntax) it is clear that the students are not really oriented to the Spanish concept. A combination of both inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic difficulties is thus inferred.

The persistent use of the present indicative is seen to reflect overlearning of the structure rather than retreat from the other tenses. The many instances of the combination of verbs seem to support this observation, and intra-lingual interference is obvious.

As a conclusion to the linguistic analysis of the morphological error types a summary of the perceived sources of the errors is presented in Table LIV. As the table shows, the majority of the errors appear to be traceable to interference from the Spanish system itself. The reader may recall, however, that the greater complexity of the Spanish verb system was perceived as a pervasive source of difficulty which should not be overlooked since it denotes the formation of new perceptions. Morphological errors reflect also inter-linguistic interference, with a few suggesting a complex of both inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic difficulties. The total findings indicated the rejection of the null hypotheses 7 and 8.

TABLE LIV

SUMMARY OF THE PERCEIVED SOURCES OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERRORS

Samples of Error Types	Perceived Sources of Interference	
	Inter- linguistic	Intra- linguistic
<u>Adjectives</u>		
mis amigos cansado	+	
las ruedas largos	+	
el segundo vez		+ (unmarked noun)
el agua frio		+
<u>Possessive adjectives</u>		
sus escuela	+	
su (instead of <u>nuestro</u>)		+
<u>Indefinite articles</u>		
son caramelos (instead of <u>unos</u>)	+	+ (infrequent usage; alternative forms)
una roja lápiz	+	
<u>Definite articles</u>		
el ejercicios	+	
la cuarto	+	
las guardias		+
<u>Present indicative tense</u>		
Juan y yo prefieren		+
nosotros no vienemos		+
nosotros no pidimos		+
Vds. preferir		+
Yo comprendermos		+
los alumnos contestaimos		+
Pepe comar		+
él lea (instead of <u>lee</u>)		+
yo do quince monedas		+
mi llama		+
<u>The imperative</u>		
no toca	+	+
levantate	+	+

TABLE LIV (Continued)

SUMMARY OF THE PERCEIVED SOURCES OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERRORS

Samples of Error Types	Perceived Sources of Interference	
	Inter- linguistic	Intra- linguistic
v eía se	+	+
<u>The preterite indicative</u>		
veía		+
tu madre dice		+
el abierto		+
despirtio		+
abrio		+
<u>The imperfect indicative</u>		
deseo tomar		+
<u>The present perfect and pluperfect</u>		
he iba		+
el paso	+	+
ellos iban	+	+
<u>Time clusters</u>		
es ocho	+	
era son las ocho		+

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A two-fold objective dictated the design of this study: to determine whether students of Spanish at the Year II grade level experience the same syntactical and morphological difficulties experienced by students at the Year IV grade level; and to determine whether the problems experienced at both grade levels reflect external interference from the previously acquired languages, English and Jamaican Creole, and internal interference from the Spanish system.

Two kinds of population were involved: (i) the student populations of 205 Year II students and 181 Year IV students (independent groups) providing examination scripts to be examined for errors; and (ii) various populations of item types providing samples of items for the examination of the errors. The scripts resulted from achievement tests designed and administered by teachers in five schools selected from two adjacent urban centres.

The test papers for each year were examined to identify the population of item types related to a particular grammatical concept. From a random sample of these item types errors were extracted, recorded and classified.

The error rate yielded by each sample of item types was computed. The Year II and the Year IV error rates relating to the same concept were tested by Fisher's test for the significance of the difference between two independent proportions. The critical values adopted were

$p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$. The error rates were measured against an accepted criterion proportion of 0.25 to determine the levels of difficulty which the concepts denote for the learners. Finally, the error types registering a proportion of at least 0.25 were analyzed linguistically.

In this chapter of the study a summary of the results of the quantitative analysis of the data is first presented. For convenience the summary of the results of the linguistic analysis is incorporated into the following section which deals with conclusions and implications. Recommendations for further research appear in the final section.

SUMMARY

Quantitative Analysis of the Syntactical Error Types

Two groups of syntactic error types were obtained from the Year II and the Year IV responses to tasks selected from their test materials: the error types related to the same concepts (the similar concepts) and the error types peculiar to each year (the dissimilar concepts). Comprising the similar group are error types related to the articles, the personal a, prepositions omitted or inserted and ser and estar. Within the context of the item types examined, analysis of the students' error performance in these four grammatical areas points to the tendency of the Year IV students to emerge consistently as the worse performers. Statistically significant differences favouring the Year II students were registered between the proportions of errors derived for the articles, the personal a and ser and estar.

Year II was also favoured, though not substantially, by the proportions resulting from responses involving the omission or insertion of prepositions. The significant differences observed between the highest proportions for the two years and between their lowest proportions indicate that proportionally the number of errors made by Year IV are far in excess of the Year II errors. Responses to item types testing the use of the articles yielded proportions of errors representing the greatest disparity between the two groups of students.

Syntactic error types peculiar to the Year II group were obtained from responses to tasks selected to determine the extent of students' control over longer constructions and the use of hay. The dissimilar Year IV error types pertain to prepositions involving choice, object pronouns, time clusters and adjectives.

Assessed from the criterion proportion of 0.25 all the syntactic concepts but hay were found to denote difficulty for the respective groups of students. There are varying degrees of difficulty however. The Year IV proportion for adjectives (0.36) excluded, all the Year IV proportions suggest that this group of students are experiencing much difficulty in acquiring the observed syntactic features of the language. Furthermore, four of these features appear to be immensely difficult: articles (0.83), prepositions involving choice (0.77), personal a (0.77) and object pronouns (0.75).

The four highest Year II error rates also indicate that the related areas of syntax, personal a (0.61), articles (0.60), longer constructions (0.51) and prepositions omitted or inserted (0.49) are highly difficult for these learners, but less so than are those noted

above for Year IV. That fifty-six per cent of the Year IV proportions exceed the highest Year II proportion is a clear indication that in relation to the syntactic features examined the Year IV students are finding syntax less manageable than are the Year II students.

Quantitative Analysis of the Morphological Error Types

Item types selected and examined for difficulties in morphology produced similar and dissimilar error types between the years.

The similar error types were obtained from item types related to adjectives, possessive adjectives, the present indicative of radical-changing verbs, the present indicative of regular verbs and the definite articles. The proportions of errors involving three of these morphological concepts, possessive adjectives, radical-changing verbs and regular verbs, reflect a measure of similarity between the two groups of students. No statistically significant differences were registered between the three pairs of proportions. A difference at the $p < 0.01$ level was however found in relation to the other two concepts: adjectives and definite articles. Unlike the Year IV students the Year II students appear to experience no difficulty with these two concepts. Among the five corresponding morphological concepts only the adjectives for Year IV with a proportion of 0.60 emerged as being highly difficult. Altogether the five pairs of proportions indicate that more errors are made at the higher level of learning although the difference between the years is less striking than in the area of syntax.

Responses to item types yielding dissimilar Year II morphological

errors pertained to three concepts: present indicative of irregular verbs, present indicative of reflexive verbs and the indefinite articles. Six morphological areas comprise the Year IV dissimilar error types: the imperative, the preterite indicative tense, the present perfect and pluperfect tenses combined, time clusters, the imperfect indicative tense and object pronouns.

The addition of these nine dissimilar groups of errors is seen to effect a widening of the difference between the years in terms of the numbers of errors made proportionally. All three Year II proportions (0.38, 0.31, 0.27) represent a level of difficulty considered to be fair, but three of the Year IV proportions (0.67, 0.65, 0.61) fall within the range considered highly difficult, and only one (0.14) below the 0.25 criterion level of difficulty. In sum, approximately forty-five per cent of the Year IV proportions exceed the highest Year II proportion suggesting that, as in the case of syntax, the observed morphological features of the language are generally more problematic for the Year IV students. A point of contrast between the years is that none of the Year II proportions reveal that the majority of the students are experiencing difficulty with a particular concept.

Particularly noteworthy are the observations that (i) the three highest Year IV proportions derive from item types relating to the verb system, the imperative, the preterite and the perfect tenses, (ii) they present a contrast with error rates resulting from the present indicative tense and (iii) the preterite indicative tense appears to be significantly more difficult than the imperfect indicative.

Of the total number of nineteen concepts examined for

morphological difficulties, sixteen register an error rate suggested by the 0.25 level of difficulty to signify learning problems for the students.

A comparison between syntax and morphology reveals that generally syntax presents the greater difficulty for both groups of students. However, at the Year IV level the degree of difficulty experienced in acquiring morphology is tending toward the syntactic level.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Quantitative Analysis

In the area of syntax Year II and Year IV students appear to be experiencing similar learning difficulties as instanced the error types occurring in relation to the similar concepts. The occurrence of similar error types at both levels of learning leads to the conclusion that the particular error types tend to persist from one level of learning to the next. Furthermore, higher proportions recorded from the Year IV responses suggest that these observed syntactic difficulties are greater at the higher level of learning.

It has been observed generally that increasing complexity characterizes the language learning task. Within the corpus of the item types examined some evidence of this increasing complexity may be derived from the fact that the Year IV test material yielded a larger number of concepts. Aggravation of the learning problem for the Year IV students is however suggested by the greater number of errors which they make. Besides, the high proportions of errors

recorded for all but one of the nine concepts for Year IV are suggestive of the accumulation of syntactic difficulties for these students.

Similar difficulties in the area of morphology also appear to be experienced by the Year II and the Year IV students, as revealed by the error types yielded by the similar morphological concepts. In relation to three of these concepts involving the possessive adjectives and the present indicative tense (two aspects) the occurrence of error types at both levels of learning suggests that these grammatical features persist as sources of difficulty into the more advanced stages of learning. From the absence of any statistically significant differences between the Year II and the Year IV proportions it is concluded that the concepts neither increase nor decrease significantly in complexity at the higher level.

In the general area of morphology, however, significant increase in complexity is indicated by the Year IV performance in relation to four other concepts stated in order of difficulty: the imperative, the preterite indicative tense, the present perfect and pluperfect tenses combined and adjectives. The complexity of morphology for the Year IV students would thus seem to develop primarily within the verbal system of the language.

The higher proportions of errors recorded for the Year IV students in the areas of syntax and morphology suggest that increasingly mastery of the grammatical structures of the language is less attainable.

The major implication suggested by these observations on the syntactic and morphological difficulties experienced by students is

that mastery of the grammatical skills of the language requires the adoption of an instructional policy aimed at arresting the learning problems as they occur at each stage. The expected outcome of such a policy would be the prevention of aggravation of the difficulties occasioned by persistence and accumulation of problems, but more positively, the assimilation by a larger number of students of aspects of the grammar being taught.

The recurrence of error types within and between years implies that the linguistic problems can accommodate scientific analysis. This kind of analysis suggests itself as a logical preliminary to planned remediation.

Further observation points to the acquisition of syntax as being generally a more difficult undertaking than the acquisition of morphology. In addition, within each of the two grammatical categories a hierarchy of the difficulty of the concepts may be observed. Although the interdependence of the elements of the language makes important all aspects necessary for effective communication, it seems feasible to suggest that the learning time and emphasis given to each aspect should be somewhat proportional to the relative degree of difficulty it expresses. Specifically each concept needs to be assessed from the quality of the students' response. This approach may not only determine relative emphasis, but may also identify the students who need to spend additional time with a particular concept.

Linguistic Analysis

The linguistic analysis of the errors made at the two grade levels resulted in the identification of inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic interference in the acquisition of the syntactic and morphological features of Spanish. Besides, a number of instances of error indicate that although students tend to be bound by the English structures conflicting with Spanish much of the difficulty seems to be traceable to a combination of inter- and intra-linguistic interference. An attempt is made below to exemplify these observations.

Inter-linguistic interference from the structures of English is imputed in a large number of cases in which errors in the use of syntax reflect correspondence with English patterns. There is no evidence that syntactic errors are directly related to Creole. In the majority of cases reflecting inter-language influence parallel structures are observed between English and Creole. Where non-parallel structures are exhibited the errors appear to be related to English, except in only one instance to be referred to later in connection with morphology. Evidence for this general observation is provided by the Year II error *es Marta's which corresponds to English and not to Creole a fi Maata employing the preposition. Similarly the Year IV error *consistio de can hardly derive from Creole which conveys the concept through an entirely different structure. The formal characteristic of languages does seem to play a vital role in the tendency of students to transfer first-language patterns to the second language. Buteau's observation that the language employed in school

seems to exert the dominant inter-lingual influence appears to be applicable in this situation involving English and Creole. Since Creole is non-formal its influence can only be assumed in the absence of any clear evidence. Subsequent reference to first-language interference will therefore imply the forms of English.

High incidence of error types involving the omission of the article, and the omission or insertion as well as inappropriate choices of prepositions are found to reflect analogy with English structures. Errors in these areas point to the general tendency of the English pattern to take precedence over the Spanish pattern in areas of divergence between the languages. Besides, the high incidence of errors reflecting this tendency indicates that students are establishing correspondence between the languages and being misled by the analogies.

The failure of students to distinguish between ser and estar and each of these two verbs from other verbs, for example ir and hacer, appears to be traceable to the absence of the distinctions in English. Mastery of these aspects of the target language thus requires of the learner a new orientation through the acquisition of new perceptions. The ability to distinguish between por and para also fits into this observation.

Inter-linguistic interference seems to operate also in situations where the Spanish word order diverges from that of English. Errors illustrating the intrusion of the English patterns may be seen in relation to longer constructions, the object pronoun, gustar and the positioning of adjectives.

In the area of morphology language contrasts appear also to be

interfering with the acquisition of a number of features. Among them are number agreement in relation to the possessive adjective and the definite article, and gender agreement in relation to the adjective and the definite article.

Independent of much intra-lingual interference in students' internalizing of the verbal system of the target language, the outstanding difference between the verb systems of English and Spanish seems to interfere generally with the learning process. For example, Year II errors in the conjugation of the verb reflect an immaturity which suggests that the students are not yet habituated to the more extensive Spanish system involving person-number relationship. Year IV errors omitting the reflexive pronoun from the verb structure appears also to be due to interference from the English pattern. Similarly omission of the accent mark from a number of the verbs including the forms of estar which appear in the category of syntax may originate also from the general absence of this particular feature in English.

As indicated above, Creole influence is assumed with respect to one morphological feature, that is, the omission in a large number of cases of the auxiliary forms of haber from expressions in the perfect tenses. Total absence of the concept is inferred, and can hardly be attributed to English which, like Spanish, formally embodies the concept.

As mentioned previously, external interference from English and Creole accounts only partially, though significantly in the case of English, for the difficulties encountered by the students. The Spanish system itself appears to contribute to the complexity of the

learning problem. Intra-lingual influences observed in the analysis are discussed in terms of this complexity.

The search for correspondences between English and Spanish was noted above as a strong tendency. Where such correspondence is found, the parallel Spanish structure would seem to reinforce the difficulty of acquiring a non-parallel related Spanish structure. Such appears to be the case involving, for example, the definite article in relation to the names of persons, the personal a, the preposition a in verb complements, the preposition de following pensar and the positions of the object pronouns.

The observed tenacity of the students' orientation to the patterns of the first language seems to imply the need for intensive intelligent practice at the points of interference aimed at helping students to develop facility in the new language patterns. But the contrasts within the target language itself indicate that there is the additional problem of making the appropriate selection from two or more related forms in the target language. It thus seems reasonable to suggest that the adult learner might be facilitated by the cognitive awareness of the concepts underlying the different forms within the new language.

The complexity of the problem of making the right choice is vividly demonstrated in the Year IV responses to tasks pertaining to the object pronouns. The errors, reflecting the interplay of inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic interference, reveal that correct choice depends not only on the ability to delineate the situations requiring the post-verbal and pre-verbal positions of the object

pronoun, but also on the ability to differentiate the object pronoun from other pronoun classes, the prepositional and the personal. In addition, the relationship between the prepositional pronoun and the object pronoun in the same structure needs to be perceived. In order for students to attain mastery of these seemingly difficult Spanish structures teachers need first of all to be aware of the many potential problems involved, to the end that practice may be so sequenced that the form already learned may help to clarify its own relationship with the succeeding structure or structures. The implication here is the adoption of a developmental approach tied in with the utilization of the contrasts within the language referred to by Carroll (1966, p. 104). This approach would presumably enable students to appreciate, for example, the difference between le di la naranja and le di a ella la naranja as also between le di la naranja and *di a ella la naranja. A further implication would seem to be that where such complexities exist constant recourse by the students to English as a reference point cannot but retard the acquisition process. This viewpoint accords with Buteau's opinion that it seems logical to present the target language as a self-contained system, though not denying the facilitative value of the first language in areas of congruence between the languages. (1970, p. 141).

The persistence of the misconception observed in *el cuarto estaba frio at the Year IV level denotes a complex inter-lingual and intra-lingual problem. It implies the need, not only for practice but also for deliberate instructional strategy aimed at inculcating the awareness of the contrast expressed by the structures hacía frío en el

cuarto and el café estaba frío from which the error above seems partially to derive. Working from the basis of the contextual situation to the linguistic form instead of vice versa appears to be a feasible approach.

Instances of intra-linguistic influence are observed from errors which reveal clearly that students are extrapolating from one situation in Spanish to another. The mismanagement of the irregular verb forms evidenced in *yo do, *yo esto, *yo sabo, *María se mi hermana reveals that the rules governing the conjugation of regular verbs are being overgeneralized to include also the irregular verbs. Further evidence of students analogizing within the language is provided by the error *el agua frio which suggests that the regular pattern of the determiner el signifying a noun in the masculine gender has been perceived, and is being used as a cue. These kinds of errors are invaluable since they indicate what has been learned, what generalizations are being made and what learning strategies are being employed. Equipped with this kind of information the teacher is better guided toward planning appropriate remediation.

In the remedial process it seems logical that teachers should recognize the gains that have been made by the students and be careful to preserve them. Since the errors noted above reveal that students are operating through conscious application of the grammatical rules of the language, one aspect of the remedial process could be that of making students aware of the extent to which their conceptions are correct and where their knowledge needs to be extended.

Regularity and frequency of pattern appear to be advantages in the learning process. Various evidences lend support to this

observation. The first of these is the evidence of greater control generally of the morphological features than of the syntactic features of the language. This result may be attributed to the generally repetitive nature of morphology which intralingually acts as a reinforcing factor in the learning process. Notably, the syntactic structures are less repetitious.

This element of repetition appears to be related to the observation that the Year IV students experience less difficulty than do the Year II students in the area of subject-verb relationship. Year IV's additional two years of study imply further exposure to the inflectional system of the language which apparently works to the advantage of the older students. The point made by Carroll and adopted by Bloom and Jakobovits that time is an important variable in the learning process seems to be supported by Year IV's superiority over Year II in this grammatical area.

An example of the advantage of regularity of forms may be cited from Year IV's performance in relation to the preterite indicative and the imperfect indicative tenses. The irregular nature of the verb forms of the preterite tense presents a direct contrast with the regularity of the forms of the imperfect tense. This difference seems accountable for the high proportion of deviant forms recorded for only the concept of the preterite tense.

The overshadowing by su of the possessive adjective nuestro or its variants provides a further example of an intra-lingual situation in which the form appearing more frequently seems to hinder the acquisition of the form appearing less frequently.

A final example taken from syntax relates to gustar which involves a minority structure in terms of word order. The problem of acquisition is viewed as resulting not only from adopting the English word order, but also from a conflict with the general Spanish word order which corresponds to that of English.

Since repetition of structures appears to be an aid to learning, teachers would be well advised, it seems, to adopt this element as a deliberate pedagogical technique aimed at securing learning where the patterns of the language appear with less frequency and regularity. This technique might also imply earlier introduction of some of the more complex aspects of the language, for example, the preterite indicative tense.

The kind of repetition being recommended is not necessarily synonymous with rote-learning of basic sentence patterns by constant repetition of a particular structure. Intra-lingual errors observed among the Year IV responses relating to time clusters strongly suggest the possible danger of particularity arising from overlearning of a structure. Instances of the persistence of son in expressions such as *era son las ocho, *seran son las dos indicate that students are bound by the particular instance son las with the consequence that generalization to include appropriately other aspects of the verb has apparently been hindered.

An important principle of language transfer would seem to be involved, that is, awareness of the relationships between the elements of the sentence appears to be a necessary condition to transferring from one linguistic situation to another. It follows that while ease

of expression remains the acceptable goal of language learning, the attainment of this facility would seem to make it incumbent on the teacher to ensure that acquisition of instances of language are buttressed by the broader concepts from which they derive.

The need for students to understand the concepts underlying linguistic forms is further illustrated by the tendency of the Year IV students to resort to several classes of verbs in response to a particular task. This tendency reflects the widening of the area of linguistic operation, as also the accumulation of concepts imperfectly understood. The derived implication would seem to accord with the recommendation made by scholars cited in Chapter 3, that the assimilation of definite amounts of language should be given priority over the covering of indefinite amounts of language.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This investigation into the subject of students' errors has stimulated a number of ideas which, presumably, could form the basis of subsequent research. These ideas may now be noted.

Since the boys' schools in Kingston were not included in the samples involved in the investigation, the study does not claim to be representative of the total Year II and Year IV populations in Kingston and Spanish Town. Consequently, replication of the study to incorporate the boys' schools is considered a priority. Of equal importance would be a similar study focusing on the rural population.

In comparing students' performance on translations and compositions, Hodgson (Chapter II) referred to the greater difficulty

students experience with the task of composition writing. An interesting study, again involving two grade levels, could be one comparing students' performance on specific grammatical items and on compositions. Preferably, these grammatical items should not be disconnected sentences in Spanish nor sentences for translation in view of the observed importance of the context of situation and of working within the foreign language itself.

In this study the focus was on written grammatical errors. A valuable study could be designed to compare spoken and written grammatical errors.

From the tables of errors included in Chapter IV it might have been observed that students appear to be experiencing lexical difficulty. Besides, since all aspects of language are interrelated, there might have been some relationship between the numbers of unperformed tasks and inadequate vocabulary. Another fruitful study may be one attempting to discover the extent of students' difficulty in the area of vocabulary. Carroll (Chapter I) implied the difficulty of researching in this area when he referred to the diverse nature of vocabulary compared with grammar. Nevertheless, given the right controls, such a study could prove valuable to foreign language education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

REPORT ON THE GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION ORDINARY LEVEL
AND ADVANCED LEVEL SPANISH EXAMINATIONS IN JAMAICA

Year	ORDINARY LEVEL				ADVANCED LEVEL		
	No. of Candidates	% Passes	Alternative Candidates	No. of Passes	No. of Candidates	% Passes	% Passes at 0 - Level
1964	1,009	21.1	5	3	119	51.3	42.0
1965	1,148	32.5	11	11	167	48.5	37.1
1966	1,274	33.1	8	8	132	44.7	44.7
1967	1,321	35.3	17	15	133	48.1	41.4
1968	1,492	27.5	17	12	126	47.6	43.7
1969	1,426	32.9	11	10	111	55.0	39.6

APPENDIX B

PROPORTIONS OF SYNTACTICAL ERROR TYPES COMPUTED ON
POSSIBLE NO. OF ITEM TYPES IN SAMPLE: YEAR II
AND YEAR IV

Concepts	Proportions for Year II	Proportions for Year IV
Articles	$\frac{43}{100} = 0.43$	$\frac{75}{100} = 0.75$
Personal <u>a</u>	$\frac{57}{100} = 0.57$	$\frac{67}{100} = 0.67$
Prepositions Omitted or Inserted	$\frac{36}{100} = 0.36$	$\frac{51}{100} = 0.51$
<u>Ser</u> and <u>Estar</u>	$\frac{38}{100} = 0.42$	$\frac{45}{100} = 0.45$
Longer Constructions	$\frac{43}{100} = 0.43$	
<u>Hay</u>	$\frac{33}{150} = 0.22$	
Prepositions involving choice		$\frac{67}{100} = 0.67$
Object Pronouns		$\frac{63}{100} = 0.67$
<u>Gustar</u>		$\frac{52}{100} = 0.52$
Time Clusters		$\frac{54}{100} = 0.54$
Adjectives		$\frac{29}{100} = 0.29$

APPENDIX C

PROPORTIONS OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES COMPUTED ON POSSIBLE
NO. OF ITEM TYPES IN SAMPLE: YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Concepts	Proportions for Year II	Proportions for Year IV
Adjectives	$\frac{33}{150} = 0.22$	$\frac{64}{150} = 0.43$
Possessive Adjectives	$\frac{43}{150} = 0.29$	$\frac{28}{100} = 0.28$
Present Indicative of Radical Changing Verbs	$\frac{33}{100} = 0.33$	$\frac{25}{100} = 0.25$
Present Indicative of Regular Verbs	$\frac{63}{200} = 0.32$	$\frac{19}{100} = 0.19$
Definite Articles	$\frac{15}{150} = 0.10$	$\frac{31}{150} = 0.21$
Present Indicative of Irregular Verbs	$\frac{58}{200} = 0.29$	
Present Indicative of Reflexive Verbs	$\frac{27}{100} = 0.27$	
Indefinite Articles	$\frac{28}{100} = 0.28$	
The Imperative		$\frac{48}{100} = 0.48$
Preterite Indicative		$\frac{120}{200} = 0.60$
Present Perfect and Pluperfect		$\frac{50}{100} = 0.50$
Time Clusters		$\frac{35}{100} = 0.35$
Imperfect Indicative		$\frac{27}{100} = 0.27$

PROPORTIONS OF MORPHOLOGICAL ERROR TYPES COMPUTED ON POSSIBLE
NO. OF ITEM TYPES IN SAMPLE: YEAR II AND YEAR IV

Concepts	Proportions for Year II	Proportions for Year IV
Object Pronouns		$\frac{10}{100} = 0.10$

APPENDIX D

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS CONTAINING TASKS FOR YEAR II

Sub-group A

1. Answer the following questions in complete sentences in Spanish:

- a) ¿Dónde vive usted?
- b) ¿Cuántos años tiene usted?
- c) ¿Cuántas personas hay en su familia?
- d) ¿Cuántas alumnas hay en la clase?
- e) ¿De qué color es la pizarra?
- f) ¿Dónde está la pizarra?
- g) ¿Qué es la oveja?
- h) ¿Qué es el lobo?
- i) ¿Qué es la guanábana; de qué color es?
- j) ¿Es dulce o agrio el limón?
- k) ¿Qué tiempo hace hoy?
- l) ¿Quién está detrás de usted?
- m) ¿Quién está delante de usted?
- n) ¿A cuántos estamos hoy?
- o) ¿Qué lengua habla usted?

2. Put into Spanish:

- a) Anna and Phillip speak Spanish and English.
- b) The teacher explains a grammar lesson to the class.
- c) If we study at home we understand the lesson.
- d) I know the rule because it is easy.
- e) I am putting the vase of flowers on the table.
- f) You and I are cousins.
- g) There are six stones under the table.
- h) Whose is the book? It is Martha's.

3. Complete the sentences in Spanish:

- a) Ella necesita _____ (a red pencil)
- b) No vemos _____ de Lola. (the mother)
- c) _____ contestar siempre en español. (We must)
- d) _____ la lección. (They are explaining)
- e) La respuesta no es _____ (difficult)
- f) No es _____ (the classroom)
- g) _____ el mapa en la pared. (I put)
- h) Hoy _____ (It is sunny)
- i) Son las _____ (3 p.m.)
- j) _____ es la capital de Jamaica.

- k) _____ es la directora de mi escuela.
- l) El zorro es _____ (a wild animal)
- m) _____ están en la cabeza. (the ears)
- n) El libro es _____ (John's).
- o) Los españoles hablan _____.

Sub-group B

1. Please answer the following questions in Spanish.

- a) ¿Cómo te llamas?
- b) ¿Dónde vives tú?
- c) ¿De dónde eres tú?
- d) ¿Eres tu trinitaria?
- e) ¿Son cubanos tus padres?
- f) ¿A qué hora vienes a la escuela?
- g) ¿A qué hora termina la escuela?
- h) ¿Cuántos años hace que asistes a la escuela de . . .
- i) ¿Qué son las estaciones del año?
- j) ¿Qué son las estaciones de Jamaica?

2. Read the following passage and answer the questions in Spanish.

La señora de López está muy preocupada porque ya son las once y el señor López no llega. Nunca tarda tanto. Es una noche fría de enero y hace muy mal tiempo. ¿Qué le habrá pasado? Justamente cuando va a llamar a la policía oye el teléfono. Es el señor López. Dice que el coche se le ha descompuesto y que va a tardar en llegar a casa. Menos mal que a él no le ha pasado nada.

- a) ¿Quién está preocupada?
- b) ¿Está preocupado el señor López?
- c) ¿Qué hora es ya?
- d) ¿Es una noche fría?
- e) ¿Por qué está preocupada la señora de López?
- f) ¿Hace buen tiempo?
- g) ¿En qué mes están?
- h) ¿Qué va a hacer la señora?
- i) ¿La señora va a buscar al señor López?
- j) ¿Qué pasa cuando la señora de López va a llamar a la policía?

3. a) Rewrite the following sentences changing the subject as indicated. Make any other necessary changes.

Preferimos ir al cine
tu _____

el _____

Juan y yo _____

vds _____

ellos _____

b) Rewrite each of the following sentences changing the verb from singular to plural or vice-versa.

- (i) Queremos agua con el almuerzo.
- (ii) ¿A qué hora ~~comenzamos~~.
- (iii) Prefieren hablar ingles.
- (iv) No quiero ir.
- (v) Empiezas muy pronto.

c) Rewrite the following sentences, changing the subject as indicated. Make any other necessary change.

El profesor no viene hoy

- (i) Ellos _____
- (ii) Nosotros _____
- (iii) Vds _____
- (iv) Pepe _____
- (v) Yo _____

5. Translate the following sentences into Spanish.

- a) I permit him to drink champagne
- b) He puts the grapes in the basket.
- c) She began to flirt with him
- d) Each one of us had his watch.
- e) We began to eat the grape.
- f) She does not live far from here.
- g) They are giving the party on Wednesday.
- h) She is coming with Antonio.
- i) They are going to eat now.
- j) She does not give him anything.

Sub-group C

1. Answer the following questions.

- a) ¿Cómo se llama?
- b) ¿Dónde vive Vd.?
- c) ¿Cuántos años tiene Vd.?
- d) ¿Tiene Vd. hermanos y hermanas?
- e) ¿Tiene Vd. gato o perro?
- f) ¿Cuántas plumas tiene Vd.?
- g) ¿Dónde aprende Vd. el español?
- h) ¿Es su reloj de oro o de plata?
- i) ¿Habla Vd. francés o inglés?
- j) ¿Cuántas pizarras hay en su clase?

2. Fill in the blank spaces with the appropriate form of the verbs in brackets.

- a) Nosotros _____ bien (trabajar).
- b) El padre _____ libros para su hija (comprar).
- c) Los alumnos _____ a las preguntas (contestar).
- d) Pablo no _____ las lecciones (estudiar).
- e) El profesor _____ el inglés. (enseñar).
- f) Yo _____ a Rosita y a Pablo (hablar).
- g) Por que no _____ Vd. la radio (escuchar).
- h) Mi lápiz _____ bien (escribir).
- i) Yo no _____ la carta española (comprender).
- j) María _____ un regalo de su tía (recibir).
- k) Mi hermana y yo _____ con nuestros padres (vivir).
- l) Juanita, ¿por qué no _____ Vd. la lección (aprender).
- m) La criada no _____ la cocina hoy (barrer).
- n) Mi padre no _____ el vino (beber).
- o) Las niñas _____ muchas frutas (comer).
- p) Nosotros _____ mucho dinero aquí (tener).
- q) El gato y el perro _____ por el jardín (correr).
- r) ¿Qué _____ nosotros los domingos? (hacer).
- s) El polvo _____ el suelo (cubrir).
- t) El panadero _____ pan. (vender).
- u) ¿_____ Vd. la puerta todas las mañanas (abrir).
- v) Dos alumnos no _____ a la clase hoy. (asistir).
- w) No _____ su hermano diez años? (cumplir).
- x) El pollo no _____ huevos (poner).
- y) ¿Quién _____ la palabra? (saber).

Sub-group D

READ the following passage carefully and then answer the questions below in Spanish. Your answers must be in complete sentences.

Es sábado. La señora Mendoza y sus hijas Luisa y Ana trabajan en la casa que está en el campo.

Los señores Mendoza no tienen hijos. Su hija, Luisa, tiene trece años y Ana quince. El señor Mendoza es médico. Tiene su despacho en el pueblo.

Dona Carmen limpia el salón y el comedor porque son grandes. Luisa lava el cuarto de baño y Ana la mayor, barre los tres dormitorios. Conchita la criada, trabaja en la cocina: barre y cocina.

La casa tiene un balcón bonito que da a la carretera. Cerca del balcón hay flores blancas, rojas y amarillas con hojas verdes. A la izquierda de la casa grande, hay una casita. Es de Conchita, la criada.

1. ¿Cuántas habitaciones tiene la casa?
2. ¿Cuántos años tiene la hija menor?
3. ¿Dónde está el despacho del doctor Mendoza?
4. ¿Dónde está la casita de Conchita?
5. ¿Trabaja el señor Mendoza en el campo o en el pueblo?

II. Answer the following in Spanish. Your answers must be in complete sentences.

1. ¿Qué fecha es hoy?
2. ¿Cuántos ojos tienes tú?
3. ¿Cuántos días hay en el mes de febrero?
4. ¿Tienes tú quince años?
5. ¿Qué es una cocina?
6. ¿Qué es un lobo?
7. ¿Cómo te llamas tú?
8. ¿Cuántas personas hay en tu familia?
9. ¿Qué es el señor Steeles?
10. ¿Es Anita un muchacho?
11. ¿Cuántos pisos tiene tu casa?
12. ¿De qué es la puerta de tu clase?
13. ¿Cuántas habitaciones hay en tu casa?
14. ¿Cuántos son cinco por doce?
15. ¿Cómo se llama el perro de la familia Roca?

III. a) Rewrite in the Singular.

1. Las cajas de tiza son pequeñas y blancas.

2. Los niños hablan inglés.
3. Nosotros sabemos.
4. Vosotros sois alumnos.
5. Las reglas de madera son morenas.

b) Rewrite in the Plural.

1. Yo compro un caramelo.
2. La hoja es amarilla.
3. La moneda de oro es vieja.
4. Hay un encendedor en el bolsillo.
5. El profesor fuma cigarillos.

IV. Insert the correct form of the verb in the following sentences.

1. ¿(Hablar) Vd. español?
2. María (ser) mi hermana.
3. Yo (estar) a la derecha de Carlos.
4. La criada (barrer) la casa.
5. Los alumnos (contestar) bien.
6. ¿Cómo (llamarse) el muchacho?
7. Mi mamá (cocinar) todos los días.
8. ¿Qué (hacer) ellos?
9. Pepe (comer) la toronja.
10. Yo (dar) quince monedas.

V. Rewrite the following filling in the underlined words with the corresponding words in Spanish.

1. our escuela
2. his hermanas
3. my calcetines
4. their perro
5. Your navaja
6. our dormitorio
7. my lápiz
8. her nariz
9. our dientes
10. their pies

Sub-group E

1. Read the following passage and answer the questions below:

En la familia López hay siete personas. Hay los señores López, dos hijos - Pepe y Juanito y tres hijas - María Margarita y

Teresita.

Pepe tiene diez años y Juanito ocho. María y Margarita son gemelas. Ellas tienen doce años y Teresita tiene solo tres.

Ahora están sentados a la mesa, porque es hora de almorzar. En la mesa hay leche, pan, legumbres, queso y mantequilla. También hay naranjas y piña.

Los muchachos quieren queso, pan y leche. Teresita quiere una naranja y legumbres.

¿Qué quieren Vds, muchachas? - dice la madre a las gemelas - No queremos nada, mamá, no tenemos hambre.

1. ¿Cuántas personas hay en la familia López?
2. ¿Cómo se llaman los muchachos?
3. ¿Qué significa la palabra "gemelas."
4. ¿Cuántos años tiene Juanito?
5. ¿Cuántos años tiene Teresita?
6. ¿Por qué están sentados a la mesa?
7. ¿Qué hay en la mesa?
8. ¿Qué quiere Teresita.
9. ¿Qué quieren las otras muchachas?
10. ¿Por qué.

APPENDIX E

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS CONTAINING TASKS FOR YEAR IV

Sub-group FA

1. Translate into Spanish:

Every morning, at about half past eight, Mr. García, having said good-bye to his wife, used to leave the house and walk to the motor-bus stop.

One day he passed a man aged about fifty, who was accompanied by a dog which was wearing small brown shoes.

Because he was in a hurry and wished to catch the 'bus, Mr. García did not say anything. However, the following day he again saw the dog and the shoes.

On the third day the same thing happened. Mr. García could not help asking the man, "Why is your dog wearing brown shoes?"

The man did not answer, so the former repeated the question. Somewhat angry, the owner of the dog replied, "Because his black ones are at the cobbler's."

Sub-group FAA

1. Complete with the present indicative of the following verbs:

mostrar:	Yo _____.	Ellos _____.
perder:	Vd. _____.	No _____ nosotros.
sentarse:	Vds. _____.	Yo _____.
pedir:	Ella _____.	Nosotros _____.
volver:	Yo _____.	Vds. _____.
comenzar:	El _____.	Nosotros _____.

2. Translate into Spanish:

- a) When he has not taken breakfast he remains at home.
- b) He will explain the exercises to us and we can practise them.
- c) He remembers that he has to see the doctor.
- d) The stores in the city are opened at 8:30 a.m.
- e) My father woke up late this morning.
- f) She likes flowers and animals.
- g) It was probably half-past two.
- h) The books were given to us by our teachers.

Sub-group FB

1. Translate into Spanish keeping the paragraphs separate as in the English:

Six-thirty. Charles opened his eyes and closed them again. It was still early. When he awoke the second time, his mother was calling him from the kitchen.

"Charles, get up! It is eight o'clock."

Charles pretended not to hear her and kept his eyes closed. He didn't feel like getting up. He was very sleepy and besides it was cold in the room. He remained covered up in bed five minutes longer until his mother pulled the covers off.

"Hurry up, or you will miss the bus!"

Charles jumped up, picked up his clothes and went to the bathroom. How cold the water was! He bathed and dressed in eight minutes. When he came out of the bathroom, his sister was leaving for the office. It was twenty-five minutes past eight. In ten minutes he had breakfast which consisted of coffee with milk and bread, and ran out of the house in order to catch the eight-forty bus at the corner.

Sub-group FC

1. Translate into Spanish.

- a) The pupils are near the picture.
- b) Robert wishes to be a merchant.
- c) The teacher asks him why he is lazy.
- d) My friends are tired and sad.
- e) Listen to the story about the Spaniards.
- f) I do not write to my friends in Spain.
- g) He reads every night.
- h) Please open the doors and windows.
- i) We will leave here at 10.15 a.m.
- j) Forty persons hold in this room.

Sub-group FD

Translate into Spanish:

1. a) I do not like red wine.

- b) What did your mother say?
- c) John forgot the plan in the train.
- d) What were the boys thinking of?
- e) They are going to ask us for money.
- f) They spent a fortnight with their parents.
- g) The wheels of the car are very big.
- h) Do not (Vd.) touch the sick boy.

2. Are you thinking about your holidays? We are thinking about ours. We are going to Madrid where we will spend Christmas and the New Year in our relative's apartment. I have never gone to Madrid at Christmas. I know that I will like the streets and the shop windows in the city centre. I will like to travel in the double-decker buses. The shops will be full of people who are buying gifts and provisions for the Christmas holidays. I will buy a lottery ticket for the grand Christmas prize. Will you? They give presents to the policemen, but not to the firemen.

Sub-group FE

1. Rewrite the following sentences in Spanish:

- a) Every day this boy thinks about his best friend.
- b) Last week Mary saw a steamer for the second time.
- c) They have gone home because they are sleepy.
- d) What is your new bicycle like?
- e) Have you (usted) seen my little brother?
- f) The floor of the classroom will be very clean tomorrow.
- g) This morning I put two coins on the table.
- h) Tell (usted) Peter that I want to speak to him.
- i) The coffee is too hot.
- j) A bird has just flown through the room.
- k) We bought just four textbooks.
- l) John's watch cannot tell the time.
- m) The cows and the sheep are looking for water.
- n) What did your (tu) mother say about your idea?
- o) At what time will you come home tonight?
- p) I do not like red shoes.
- q) Do not (ustedes) return without the money which I need.
- r) Who is sleeping under the bed?
- s) My brother is going to bring a present for me.
- t) We have written all the exercises.

2. Rewrite the following passage in Spanish:

Last night, my friend Peter did not sleep well. He was thinking about his examinations. He knew that he had spent too much time

playing football and cricket with his friends during the holidays.

Today he has decided not to go to school¹. But he has to go because his mother is one of the teachers in² his school.

When the examination starts he sees that the questions³ are not very difficult and he can answer them. He is a very lucky boy.

1. exámenes

1. Use "de"

3. afortunado

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